THE PASTOR AS A BIBLICAL COUNSELOR AND EQUIPPER OF BIBLICAL COUNSELORS WITHIN THE LOCAL CHURCH

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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by

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May 2024

APPROVAL SHEET

THE PASTOR AS A BIBLICAL COUNSELOR AND
EQUIPPER OF BIBLICAL COUNSELORS
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To Rooree, my better half,

and

the Kay family,

for their generous love and support.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BCCB	A Biblical Counseling Coalition Book
BDAG	Danker, Frederick W., Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
CCC	Christian Counselor's Commentary
CCT	Contours of Christian Theology
EEC	Evangelical Exegetical Commentary
IVPNTC	InterVarsity Press New Testament Commentary
JBC	*Journal of Biblical Counseling*
JPP	*Journal of Pastoral Practice*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
NAC	New American Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*

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PREFACE

Looking back on the years of PhD studies, I realize that I went through various hardships that life could bring, including health, financial, and vocational difficulties. In the middle of my studies, a medically unidentified condition struck me, and I had to step down from pastoral ministry and retreat to my in-laws for medical treatment and recovery. Despite the overwhelming sense that everything was falling apart, the Lord steadfastly upheld me through the support and love of his people. Their encouragement enabled me to persevere in my studies and eventually overcome the illness.

I thank my wife, Rooree, who brought wisdom and joy in my darkest times. Her calmness in Christ, sense of humor, and encouragement helped me stay hopeful and finish this dissertation. I am so thankful for you and will always love you, Rooree. Ellie and Sharon, our children, are God's blessings to us as we witness together daily. Thank you so much for praying for "Appa" to finish his dissertation every night.

I am grateful for my parents, Ki Ho and Kyung Hee Kim. Particularly, my father, Ki Ho, has planted the heart of a pastor in me. He has exemplified the essence and joy of being a pastor, diligently shepherding God's flock for nearly three decades at a single church. I take great pride in their unwavering commitment to the Lord and his church, appreciating the spiritual legacy they have built.

I am grateful to the Kay family for their generous support in completing my PhD program. They taught me the meaning of "Freely you have received; freely give" (Matt 10:8). Mr. and Mrs. Kay, your Christlike generosity taught me to be a generous giver.

I am grateful for my dissertation committee. A special word of thanks to my supervisor, Robert Jones, who has graciously shepherded me through the dissertation

process and wonderfully modeled what it is to be a pastor-theologian! Dr. Jones, your dedication to the Word and Christ's church inspires me to become a better shepherd. Thank you to Dr. John Henderson and Dr. James Hamilton for serving on my committee and giving me insightful feedback and comments.

Above all, I am thankful to God, the Shepherd of my life. "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Ps 23:1).

Daniel S. Kim

Suwanee, Georgia

May 2024

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The modern biblical counseling movement (BCM) stands in a long tradition of pastoral theology, especially Calvinistic Reformed theology.1 Although secular psychology has heavily influenced today's mainline pastoral care, the BCM strives to restore biblical pastoral care and counseling distinguished from secular psychology and psychotherapy. Nonetheless, it is surprising that the BCM has yet to produce a formal academic publication about the pastor's identity and work as a biblical counselor and equipper of biblical counselors, a claim emphasized by Jay Adams.

Thesis

Utilizing the biblical theology of the shepherd metaphor in the New Testament, I will examine the theological legitimacy of the BCM's claim that pastors should biblically counsel their members and equip them to counsel one another biblically. Through the biblical-theological investigation, I will demonstrate that the biblical theology of divine shepherding depicts a pastoral counseling ministry that comprises both personal and corporate aspects involving the entire church for the mutual ministry of the Word.

[1] Specifically, in his historical research of the biblical counseling movement, David Powlison argues that Jay Adams, the founder of the modern BCM, "was heir to that particular tradition of the Reformation deriving from John Calvin. Within the Reformed tradition, he was most influenced by nineteenth-century American Presbyterianism and by certain elements of twentieth-century Dutch Calvinist philosophy." David Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement: History and Context* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2010), 3.

Definition of Key Terms

Pastor. In this dissertation, I will equate the Christ-appointed undershepherds with the general office of elders, comprised of elders and pastors of the local church.[2] The New Testament uses several words to refer to the office of the elder. Most commonly, πρεσβύτερος (Acts 2:17; 1 Tim 5:1–2) and ἐπίσκοπος (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim 3:2) are used, and less frequently, ποιμήν (Eph 4:11). These words are usually translated in English as "elder," "overseer" (or bishop), and "pastor," respectively.[3] Reformed Presbyterians and Baptists have historically agreed that the New Testament writers used these words interchangeably to refer to the same ecclesiological office.[4] With this interpretation, they have also acknowledged both the parity and plurality of eldership in the church. Though Reformed Baptists may not agree with Presbyterians' formal distinction in the office (i.e., the distinction between a teaching elder and a ruling elder), both groups agree that there are at least functional or practical distinctions based on the gifts among the elders.[5]

In this line of thinking, Adams claim that while all elders should serve in some form of biblical counseling ministry as active shepherds to care for the souls under their care, the teaching pastor or lead pastor[6] has a greater responsibility to oversee the

[2] The definition of pastor has become more ambiguous recently within the mainline pastoral counseling tradition. For example, after decades of conflict and compromise, the American Association of Pastoral Counseling (AAPC) revised their bylaws in 2011 and removed the ordination requirement entirely for its members. In other words, a counselor can be a "pastoral" counselor without having any church affiliation or ordination. This pragmatic reformulation of pastoral identity, one that is found outside the church, has compromised the scriptural model for pastoral care and counseling.

[3] Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the *English Standard Version*. Further, any italics in Bible quotations are my own additions.

[4] I am mentioning the Reformed Presbyterian tradition here because Jay Adams was a Presbyterian. He wrote books on pastoral care and church counseling from the perspective of Presbyterian polity.

[5] For a helpful resource for understanding different theological perspectives on eldership, see Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), chaps. 7–9.

[6] Daniel Akin, a Baptist theologian, also highlights the function of a teaching pastor: "In essence the pastor-teacher is 'first among equals' by virtue of his office and function among the elders, if there is a plurality. One who occupied the primary office of teacher held a significant place of leadership in the Old Testament and the synagogue (cf. John 3:10 NKJV, where Jesus calls Nicodemus 'the teacher of

counseling ministry as a whole within the local church (John 10:4-5; Acts 20:20).[7] This does not mean that the teaching pastor is solely responsible for counseling every member of the church, especially if the church has a sizeable attendance. However, as the lead pastor, he is responsible for overseeing the entire biblical counseling ministry by providing training and support to fellow elders and lay biblical counselors to effectively shepherd the flock under their care (Eph 4:11-12). Since Scripture is not prescriptive about how pastors should structure counseling ministry and equip biblical counselors within the church, they could delegate counseling ministry to pastors, elders, and other qualified members who are more trained and gifted in biblical counseling under the supervision of the elder board depending on the church's size and the pastors' gifts. This will also help ensure that the counseling services provided to church members are consistent with biblical teachings and reach all members needing personal shepherding.

Biblical counseling. Biblical counseling is an interpersonal ministry of the Word that, with the enablement of the Holy Spirit, focuses on Christ-centered applications of Scripture to help individuals struggling with personal or relationship issues. For this reason, it should be rightly viewed as a "hybrid of discipleship and biblical friendship"[8] that emphasizes "the application of God's Word and walking in

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Israel'). It is difficult to believe this would have been diminished in the churches that certainly were influenced, to some degree, by both (consider James 3:1 at this point). The pastor-teacher is a gift of God given to his church to lead, teach, and protect her." Daniel Akin, "The Single-Elder-Led Church: The Bible's Witness to a Congregational/Single-Elder-Led Polity," in *Perspectives on Church Government: 5 Views of Church Polity*, ed. Chad Owen Brand and R. Stanton Norman (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2004), 54.

[7] Adams believed that even though all elders are called to serve as biblical counselors to care for the flock, the senior pastor or pastor-teacher should oversee the church's counseling ministry by equipping and teaching church members to participate in the counseling ministry, including the elders who are not trained in biblical counseling. Adams exhorted the teaching pastors, "Begin with your Elders. It should go without saying that Elders can be trained to help carry the load of counseling. Most directly, they can enter into the work with the minister since, jointly with him, they share in the oversight of a congregation, an oversight that includes counseling." Jay E. Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock: A Handbook on Pastoral Ministry, Counseling, and Leadership*, Jay Adams Library (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 25.

[8] Edward Welch, "What Is Biblical Counseling, Anyway?," *JBC* 16, no. 1 (1997): 5.

God's Spirit when dealing with matters of life as a whole."[9] In this regard, biblical counseling is not a theological innovation of today but an ongoing ministry of the Christian church since the early church.

Biblical counselor. The BCM claims that the New Testament assumes that all Christians should engage in biblical counseling ministry to some degree.[10] In other words, biblical counseling ministry is not exclusively for state-licensed counseling professionals or ministers of the gospel; instead, "all believers have been appointed to the broad task of counseling" and mutual care.[11] This generalization does not ignore various gifts within the church. Therefore, the BCM has understood biblical counseling ministry by believers in different categories based on their gifts, education levels, interests, and other factors. Robert Jones suggests several categories that represent an accurate summation of various models suggested by other biblical counselors:

> Category 1: Members provide personal care and basic biblical counsel to one another.
>
> Category 2: Group leaders and mentors provide formative discipling and spiritual direction and handle simple counseling situations with their group members or with mentees assigned to them.
>
> Category 3: Designated counselors and trainers provide formal counseling for members needing a higher degree of care. Some can also assist in training others.
>
> Category 4: Pastors/elders provide formal counseling, train members, and oversee the entire ministry.[12]

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[9] John Henderson, *Equipped to Counsel: A Training Course in Biblical Counseling*, 2nd ed. (Fort Worth, TX: Association of Biblical Counselors, 2020), 38.

[10] Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel: Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling*, Jay Adams Library (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 41. It is worth mentioning that Adams distinguishes between official and informal biblical counseling ministries in his book *Ready to Restore*. There, he claims that laymen are called to informal counseling, whereas elders and pastors are called to formal counseling as the appointed undershepherds of the flock. See Jay E. Adams, *Ready to Restore: An Introductory Guide to Biblical Counseling* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2021), 16.

[11] Henderson, *Equipped to Counsel*, 17.

[12] Robert D. Jones, "Who Can and Should Do Biblical Counseling?," in *The Gospel for Disordered Lives: An Introduction to Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling*, by Robert D. Jones, Kristin L. Kellen, and Rob Green (Nashville: B & H, 2021), 24.

The Biblical Counseling Movement. The BCM is not a monolithic movement; rather, it encompasses a spectrum of diverse ideas and methods. However, there are fundamental theological principles that all biblical counselors share in common. As Heath Lambert helpfully summarizes, "All biblical counselors are united around core principles of the sufficiency of Scripture, the necessity of the power of the gospel to bring about true and lasting change, progressive sanctification, the importance of the church and concern over secular psychology."[13] In this dissertation, I use the phrase "The Biblical Counseling Movement" to denote the predominant group of biblical counselors who adhere to these fundamental beliefs. Specifically, as stated in the confessional statement of the Biblical Counseling Coalition, these biblical counselors believe that biblical counseling must be based in the life of the church and that pastors have a responsibility to provide biblical counseling and to "equip and oversee diverse forms of every-member ministry (Eph 4:11-14)." [14]

Methodology

The purpose of this dissertation is not to determine the claim's usefulness but to establish its theological legitimacy. Although the BCM's assertion that pastors should biblically counsel and equip biblical counselors could be evaluated by qualitative or quantitative research to determine its efficacy, the present dissertation will employ the biblical theology of shepherding metaphor as an evaluative tool to accomplish its purpose due to my commitment to Reformed theology.[15]

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[13] Heath Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2012), 47.

[14] Biblical Counseling Coalition, "BCC Confessional Statement," last modified July 2018, https://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/confessional-statement/.

[15] In this dissertation, my commitment to Reformed theology is rooted in key theological components that have profoundly shaped my understanding of the Christian faith and informed my approach to theological inquiry. I uphold the absolute sovereignty of God in all aspects of creation, history, and human lives, and affirm the authority, inspiration, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture as the ultimate source of truth and guidance. Embracing the doctrines of grace, including total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints, I

Various theological testing methods, including historical or doctrinal examinations, can be employed to verify the theological legitimacy of the claim. Some pastoral theologians propose that a systematic theological approach, with Christology or the doctrine of the Trinity as the foundation, could yield theologically fruitful results.[16] However, a historical or doctrinal approach should not be a primary approach to pastoral theology since the Bible already provides a rich biblical theology of "shepherding."[17] Prioritizing a biblical-theological analysis of the matter, on the other hand, is critical because a redemptive-historical understanding of the shepherding metaphor reflects a distinctly biblical worldview contained in the term "pastoral."

As Jay Adams claims,

> The name "pastoral" is a uniquely Christian term that expresses a fundamental concept deeply embedded in every biblical portrayal of Christian ministry. The term refers to a rich scriptural figure that finds its beginning and end in God. He, who is the "Shepherd of Israel" (Psalm 80:1), ultimately demonstrated the meaning of His covenantal love as the Great Shepherd of the sheep by giving His life for them (John 10:11).[18]

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acknowledge God's sovereign role in salvation and the security of believers. Furthermore, my adherence to covenant theology provides a framework for interpreting the Bible and understanding the relationships between God and humanity throughout biblical history.

[16] For instance, Andrew Purves argues that contemporary pastoral theology must be reconstructed using a sound Christology. Similarly, Daniel Akin and Scott Pace develop their pastoral theology predominantly based on the doctrine of the Trinity. However, pastoral theology has historically viewed the biblical shepherding metaphor as a fundamental theological perspective for developing theory and practice. David Davidson's dissertation is an insightful analysis of pastoral theologians who employed shepherding metaphors. David Allen Davidson, "An Examination of the Shepherding Metaphor in Pastoral Theology" (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022).

[17] Geerhardus Vos and Richard Gaffin explain the relationship between biblical theology and systematic theology well. They argue that biblical theology, which focuses on the historical activity of revelation in Scripture, is essential for regulating exegesis (interpreting biblical texts). This is because a proper understanding of the unity of the Bible and the historical structure of the revelation process is crucial for interpreting Scripture correctly. In other words, they view that systematic theology draws from the finished product of revelation and thus relies on biblical theology, which follows the historical development of revelation. To properly grasp biblical pastoral theology, it is essential to exegetically trace the shepherding metaphor throughout the entire Bible to comprehend God's intention and means for shepherding his people. Once the proper biblical theological comprehension of the topic has been established, systematic theology can be used to comprehend it in light of our current context. Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975); Richard Gaffin, "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," *WTJ* 38, no. 3 (1976): 281–99.

[18] Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock*, 5.

Agreeing with this statement, I argue that the definition of the term "pastoral" must derive from its proper biblical context, which could be understood through a biblical theology of shepherding metaphor.

By entering into the world of the Bible and examining how the theme of shepherding is portrayed within its canonical and historical context and how it has been progressively revealed throughout God's redemptive history, a biblical understanding of "pastoral" can be attained that is free from contemporary assumptions and biases. As James Hamilton claims, biblical theology acts as a bridge to enter the thought-world of the biblical authors. He explains,

> There is no analogy for the God of the Bible. He stands alone. We will experience him only if he reveals himself. In the Bible he has done just that. How do we come to know him? From his revelation of himself, from learning to read the Bible from the Bible itself. To learn to read the Bible is to learn to understand this world from the perspective of the biblical authors, which is to learn a divinely inspired perspective.[19]

In that line of thinking, the shepherding metaphor will be examined to understand what Scripture means by "pastoral" and to assess the BCM's claim and determine if it aligns with biblical theology.

In this chapter, after providing a brief survey on contemporary Protestant pastoral theology and literature review, I will first demonstrate that the BCM's claim is not a slogan for ministry but a theological vision of the movement that helps the pastors see their role as counselors. Then, in the subsequent sections, I will explain the BCM's claim, "Pastors should biblically counsel and equip biblical counselors," from three different theological angles: anthropological, epistemological, and ecclesiological. Since the topic has not been thoroughly examined until now, it will function as a comprehensive analysis from multiple perspectives to avoid any biases.

[19] James M. Hamilton Jr., *What Is Biblical Theology? A Guide to the Bible's Story, Symbolism, and Patterns* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 19.

Chapter 2 will explore the biblical theology of the shepherding metaphor, which will serve as a standard for assessing the claim. To eliminate any confusion and narrow the topic's vast scope, the shepherding metaphor will be categorized into three fundamental aspects: God's relationship with his sheep, the appointed shepherds of God, and the divine telos of the Shepherd.

Chapters 3 and 4 are dedicated to scrutinizing the BCM's assertions. The first claim, "Pastors should biblically counsel their congregation," will be examined in chapter 3, while chapter 4 will focus on the second claim, "Pastors should equip biblical counselors." Both claims will be analyzed from three theological perspectives: anthropological, epistemological, and ecclesiological. The ecclesiological perspective will receive the most attention. Each of these angles will be assessed in light of the biblical theology of the shepherding metaphor, which comprises three components: God's relationship with his sheep, the appointed shepherds of God, and the divine telos of the Shepherd. Additionally, the present praxis resulting from the claims will be evaluated based on appropriate theological perspectives.

The final chapter, chapter 5, will present practical recommendations based on the assessment's results. The proposed suggestions will enhance the movement's comprehension of the claim by suggesting theological and conceptual modifications in relevant areas. Additionally, practical recommendations will be offered to improve pastoral counseling in local churches. Moreover, proposals for para-church biblical counseling ministries, which form a crucial part of the biblical counseling movement, will be put forward.

A Brief Survey of Contemporary Protestant Pastoral Theology

The purpose of the present section is to investigate the pastoral theology of the BCM to evaluate the identity and responsibilities of pastors as biblical counselors and equippers of other biblical counselors, as proposed by biblical counseling experts.

Classifying the current theological research as pastoral theology is crucial because different theological approaches have discipline-specific research methodologies that determine the direction and interest of a particular theological subject study. Historically, "pastoral" theology has studied the clerical office (identity and role of the pastor), although the definition has undergone many changes.[20] In that sense, this research falls under traditional pastoral theology as it seeks to evaluate and further develop a theological foundation for understanding the pastor's identity and responsibilities as a biblical counselor and equipper of biblical counselors.

Regrettably, as Derek Tidball explains, "pastoral theology is notoriously difficult to define with precision" today.[21] Despite its inspiration from the biblical imagery of the shepherd, the field has grown ambiguous since the twentieth century. J. A. Lyons also notes, "No single definition of the field is universally accepted, particularly among Protestant traditions."[22] For this reason, Park states that understanding pastoral identity and responsibilities has become more ambiguous than ever, contributing to the current confusion in modern pastoral theology:

> The more we, as pastoral theologians, have depended upon cultural perspectives and strategies, and the more these secular "conversation partners" have crossed over appropriate boundaries between Christian wisdom and other cultural perspectives at theoretical and practical levels, the more we have experienced a discrepancy between who we are and what we do.[23]

Since the development of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) in the earlier part of the twentieth century by A. T. Boisen (1876–1966), who combined liberal theology and secular psychology to create "empirical theology" for pastoral care, the field has

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[20] Ian A. McFarland, "Pastoral Theology," in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. Ian A. McFarland et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 371.

[21] Derek J. Tidball, "Pastoral Theology," in *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. David F. Wright and Sinclair Ferguson, and J. I. Packer (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 493.

[22] J. A. Lyons, "Pastoral Theology," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Daniel J. Treier and Walter A. Elwell, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 645.

[23] Samuel Park, "An Evolving History and Methodology of Pastoral Theology, Care, and Counseling," *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health* 9, no. 1 (June 2006): 6.

moved away from the traditional theological analysis of Scripture to elucidate pastoral identity and ministry toward a functional approach to pastoral ministry.[24] Thus, during this time, the term "pastoral" lost its original theological meaning and became a term newly defined by the pastors' functions. Also, as the focus of the discipline changed, the methodology for developing pastoral theology underwent transformation. For instance, Boisen believes that patients are "living human documents" and that these documents are the authoritative source for theological reflection.[25] In other words, Scripture as the norm is set aside in favor of personal experience to develop a pastoral theology that is empirically based.

Following Boisen, his pupil Seward Hiltner (1909–1984) champions the case-study method as the interpretive paradigm for pastoral action, shifts the discipline even more away from its methodological roots in Scripture and church tradition, and resettles it in the counseling situation.[26] Thus, in Hiltner's paradigm of pastoral theology, "pastoral" refers to pastoral functions with a "view toward contributing to theological inquiry itself."[27] In this model, pastoral theology views the relationship between theology and psychology as dialogical, meaning that both are expected to inform and be informed by each other. This mutual influence and correlative approach to theology and psychology is integral to Hiltner's pastoral care. Thus, Andrew Purves observes that Hiltner's suggestion to study concrete experiences in pastoral care and establish a branch

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[24] Charles V. Gerkin, *An Introduction to Pastoral Care* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 61. One can argue that there has constantly been a redefining of "pastoral" in church history. However, a dramatic shift that includes the integration of social science and psychology began with the modern pastoral care movement. *Ministry to the Word and Sacrament* by Bernard J. Cooke and *A History of Pastoral Care in America* by E. Brooks Holifield are helpful resources for understanding the evolution of pastoral theology. Bernard J. Cooke, *Ministry to Word and Sacraments: History and Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976); E. Brooks Holifield, *A History of Pastoral Care in America: From Salvation to Self-Realization* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983).

[25] Anton T. Boisen, *The Exploration of the Inner World: A Study of Mental Disorder and Religious Experience* (New York: Harper, 1936), 84–94.

[26] Derek Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds: An Introduction to Pastoral Theology* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1986), 224–28.

[27] Gerkin, *An Introduction to Pastoral Care*, 68.

of study called "pastoral theology" led the discipline to adopt a clinical, psychotherapeutic, or social-scientific approach rather than a theological one.[28]

While mainstream Protestants and many conservative evangelicals like Carroll Wise (1929–2015)[29] and Wayne Oates (1917–1999)[30] adopted Hiltner's approach without criticism, Methodist theologian Thomas Oden (1931–2016) encouraged Protestant churches to return to the traditional model of pastoral care. Oden wrote, "Pastoral theology is that branch of Christian theology that deals with the office and functions of the pastor. It is theology because it treats the consequences of God's self-disclosure in history. It is pastoral because it deals with those consequences as they pertain to the pastor's roles, tasks, duties, and work."[31]

For this reason, pastoral theologians who embraced Paleo-Orthodoxy, such as Oden and Purves, viewed Scripture and church tradition as normative sources of pastoral theology and exhorted the church to use them to form pastoral practices.[32] In essence, they utilized tradition in various ways to inform their proposals for pastoral care.[33] Although Oden did not propose a radically new pastoral counseling and care paradigm as Boisen, diverging from Hiltner's pastoral therapeutic model, he contended against secular psychology's encroachment of the field and the unbiblical redefinition of "pastoral."

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[28] Andrew Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology: A Christological Foundation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 14.

[29] Carroll A. Wise was an American theologian and pastoral counselor who taught at Southern Methodist University. He wrote several influential books on pastoral care, emphasizing the role of the pastor as a caregiver and spiritual guide. His approach integrated theology, psychology, and spirituality.

[30] Wayne Oates was an evangelical American pastoral theologian who made significant contributions to the field of pastoral counseling and psychology. He promoted the integration of psychology and taught at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

[31] Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), x.

[32] Oden, *Pastoral Theology*; Andrew Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*.

[33] Richard R. Osmer, "Practical Theology," in *Mapping Modern Theology: A Thematic and Historical Introduction*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic and Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 18.

Rather than unquestioningly embracing psychological models, he challenged the church to investigate Scripture and the church's historical documents to develop pastoral theology firmly based on historical Christianity.[34]

In recent years, there has been a growing trend (known as the social justice model of pastoral care) away from traditional pastoral theology and the psychotherapy model of pastoral care.[35] These new pastoral theologians argue that the clinical pastoral care paradigm used by mainstream and liberal pastors views pastors only as priests responsible for addressing individuals' psychological problems, neglecting the communal and social dimensions of their lives. These theologians advocate for pastors to act as social prophets and consider the broader societal issues that impact individuals. They assert that pastoral care should expand beyond the individual and embrace a more prophetic role, akin to the Old Testament. While this emphasis on social action and public policy may seem at odds with pastoral care's personal and priestly aspects, supporters like Alastair Campbell believe it will lead to a more comprehensive pastoral care theology.[36]

Literature Review

In contrast to the integrationist Christian counseling philosophy, which limits pastoral counseling to only spiritual matters in personal distress, the biblical counseling movement views secular psychologists or psychotherapists as unnecessary components of Christian counseling. Jay Adams claimed, "The only professional known to the Scriptures is the pastor and the elders of the church who, especially, are summoned to

[34] Oden, preface to *Pastoral Theology*, vii. In line with Oden, Andrew Purves defined pastoral theology as "principally concerned first with the practice of God, that is, with what God does as a result of who God is. Second, it moves to reflection on the participative practice of the church within that theological perspective through our union with Christ." Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, 19.

[35] Some of the proponents of this pastoral care model are Alastair V. Campbell, Rebecca S. Chopp, and James Newton Poling.

[36] Alastair V. Campbell, "The Politics of Pastoral Care," *Contact* 62, no. 1 (January 1979): 4.

this duty."[37] He asserted that the only individuals Scripture authorizes to conduct the formal private ministry of the Word (counseling) are the Christ-appointed shepherds (pastors/elders). Although the BCM claims that all Christians are called to mutually care for one another through the interpersonal ministry of the Word, it maintains that the pastors are the only authorized officers to formally conduct counseling ministry, in contrast to the integrationist model that views Christian psychotherapists or state-licensed therapists as the professionals of soul care. Moreover, the movement views pastors as the trainers of lay biblical counselors who mobilize the whole church to function as a community of soul care.

The BCM's concept of the pastor as a counselor is unique in comprising both individual and corporate aspects. David Powlison, a next-generation leader of the movement, summed up these micro and macro modes of pastoral counseling through the following appeal, "Pastor, you are a counselor—and much more than a counselor. A pastor also teaches, equips, supervises, and counsels other counselors. You are the counselor-in-chief."[38] That is to say, pastors are to conduct counseling ministry at individual and corporate levels as the authorized shepherd of a congregation. They must oversee the entire counseling ministry of the local church by equipping and empowering lay biblical counselors to participate in the soul care ministry while also actively counseling individual members of the church. In this sense, Robert Jones claims, "In addition to overseeing the entire counseling ministry, Scripture assigns pastors two duties: counseling their members and training them to counsel."[39]

Adams was the first biblical counselor to claim that pastors are both biblical counselors and the equippers of biblical counselors. In his groundbreaking first

[37] "Competent to Counsel: An Interview with Jay Adams," Ligonier Ministries, January 25, 2014, https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/competent-counsel-interview-jay-adams. Jay Adams also claimed this view in *Shepherding God's Flock*, 175.

[38] David Powlison, "The Pastor as Counselor," *JBC* 26, no. 1 (2012): 24.

[39] Jones, "Who Can and Should Do Biblical Counseling?," 25.

publication, *Competent to Counsel*, Adams explains the works of a pastor through the shepherd metaphor from the Bible. Utilizing Psalm 23 as his primary text, he argues that, just as the biblical shepherds were responsible for providing the sheep with rest, peace, and basic needs, so too are pastors, as Christ's undershepherds, responsible for meeting all spiritual needs through the ministry of the Word.[40] Moreover, he believes that this pastoral work of applying God's Word to particular human needs must be done in both public (preaching) and private (counseling) settings. In that sense, Adams maintains that the pastor's ministry as a biblical counselor is not merely professional but fundamentally pastoral, requiring a profound understanding of the Bible and the ability to apply its teachings to the issues and challenges individuals face.[41] Thus, he claims, "They [pastors] cannot delegate this responsibility to a psychiatrist. A minister, therefore, must consider nouthetic confrontation as an essential part of his pastoral responsibility."[42]

Adams also believed that the pastor should train and equip lay counselors so that the congregation may provide biblical mutual care and counseling to one another. While Adams's concept was still in its early stages of development, he elucidated the significance of the pastor functioning as an equipper and coordinator of biblical counselors in *Shepherding God's Flock*, explaining that a church that has an active mutual ministry of care and counseling is developed through the pastor's labor of equipping the congregation:

> Such congregations, however, do not arise automatically. They are brought into being by God through His servants. They must be developed, molded, and guided by shepherds who have their eyes fixed on the goal and through discouragement and temporary failure never waver from that goal, but with patience press on toward it.

[40] Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 66.

[41] Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 17.

[42] Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 66.

> In time (often after much of it may elapse), if they persevere, God may honor those efforts far beyond expectations. [43]

Ready to Restore explains a more elaborate version of his thoughts about pastors as trainers and organizers of biblical counselors, though he does not suggest practical ways to train and develop lay counselors. He claims,

> Lay counselors must be willing to receive instruction in counseling from the church, just as they would be willing to receive instruction in evangelism or family living. On the other hand, since God requires laymen to counsel, it is incumbent upon churches to provide such instruction. . . . Every lay counselor also must be willing to subject his counseling activities to the oversight and order of the church. No one should take it on himself to hang out a shingle and do counseling apart from the church. All lay counseling must be done as a part of one's church activities and under its authority.[44]

Although pastors are the authorized teachers and shepherds to lead the church's soul care ministry, biblical counseling is not limited to the pastoral domain alone in Adams's comprehensive vision for the church.[45] Nevertheless, it is open to all Christians so that the church of Christ would grow in unity and maturity (Eph 4:11–12). He claims, "When the church develops a biblical form of counseling within its purview . . . a new day of preventive counseling will dawn."[46] Moreover, he claims that church-based counseling, which involves trained lay counselors and caretakers, could "provide *total* care for the counselee, not merely care that extends to one hour one day a week."[47] Thus, he viewed the equipping of lay biblical counselors as a crucial component of the

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[43] Adams, "Mutual Ministry in Counseling," in *Shepherding God's Flock*, 193. Adams's claim concerning pastors being the equippers and organizers of biblical counselors is not fully developed in his theology in *Shepherding God's Flock*. Nevertheless, he introduces the concept in seed form in the 1975 version of the book.

[44] Jay E. Adams, *Ready to Restore: An Introductory Guide to Christian Counseling* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2021), 21.

[45] Adams's *Ready to Restore* is a helpful book that explains the significance of Christians' one-another ministry. There, he argues that every Christian is called to "restore" one another. Nonetheless, he contends that lay Christians are obligated to provide informal counseling that does not involve church authority, while pastors are responsible to offer formal counseling. Adams, *Ready to Restore*, 15.

[46] Jay E. Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling: More Than Redemption* (Grand Rapids: Ministry Resource Library, 1986), 277.

[47] Jay E. Adams, *Lectures on Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), 52.

pastor's responsibility to help build the body of Christ and maintain its spiritual well-being.

The subsequent generations of biblical counselors upheld Adams's conceptual view of the pastor's role as a biblical counselor and the equipper of biblical counselors. Hence, they reinforced the movement's pastoral theology by deepening its understanding in theory and practice. For example, Timothy Lane's DMin thesis, *Counseling in the Local Church: Pastor as Shepherd and Equipper*, lays out an extensive theory and guidelines for a pastor conducting a counseling ministry in the local church.[48] As the title indicates, Lane argues for the pastor's significant role as a biblical counselor and the equipper of lay counselors for establishing a mutual-care ministry in a local church. Powlison's "The Pastor as Counselor" also discusses the dual mode of pastoral counseling. In the article, Powlison uniquely identifies the pastor as the "counselor-in-chief" to explain the critical two-fold functions of the pastor in developing soul care ministry in the church.[49] Another notable work on the subject is *The Pastor and Counseling* by Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju. In this practical and helpful book, the authors provide a brief overview of the pastoral counseling process from a biblical counseling perspective.[50] Furthermore, they emphasize the importance of pastors partnering with other lay counselors in the church by training and discipling them. *The Church as a Culture of Care* by T. Dale Johnson is also a relevant publication that explains the importance of the church body functioning as God's instrument of care and

[48] Timothy S. Lane, "Counseling in the Local Church: The Pastor as Shepherd and Equipper," (DMin thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary, 2006).

[49] Powlison, "The Pastor as Counselor." Powlison identifies the pastor as counselor-in-chief because he views the pastor as the lead biblical counselor in the church and the shepherd who oversees the entire operation of the church's counseling ministry.

[50] Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling: The Basics of Shepherding Members in Need*, 9Marks (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015). The book presents a solid understanding of biblical counseling, and it is an excellent introduction for pastors who are not familiar with biblical counseling. Nevertheless, focusing mainly on the practical aspects of pastoral counseling, the authors did not develop a sufficient pastoral theology that explains the pastor as a biblical counselor and equipper of biblical counselors.

the two-fold role of the pastor as a counselor and the equipper.[51] Finally, Robert Kellemen's *Equipping Biblical Counselors* is a pastor's training manual for equipping lay counselors, aligning with Jay Adams's vision of the pastor as a biblical counselor and equipper of biblical counselors.[52] Nonetheless, these works do not adequately provide, on an academic level, a theological and historical analysis of pastoral theology concerning the pastor's calling as a biblical counselor or equipper of biblical counselors, which is the objective of this dissertation.[53]

The BCM's Claim as a Theological Vision

A cursory examination of contemporary Protestant pastoral theology in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries reveals significant modifications in its theological focus and methodology. The biblical counseling movement emerged due to modern pastoral theology's fast and biblically unrooted alterations.[54] Although Adams welcomed

[51] T. Dale Johnson Jr., *The Church as a Culture of Care: Finding Hope in Biblical Community* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2021). Since Johnson focuses mainly on the body of Christ functioning as a community of care, he does not adequately lay out pastoral theology in this particular model.

[52] Bob Kellemen, *Equipping Biblical Counselors: A Guide to Discipling Believers for One-Another Ministry* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2022).

[53] Another work pertinent to my topic is Deepak Reju's "Dear Pastor: Shepherd God's Flock," in *Biblical Counseling and the Church: God's Care through God's People*, ed. Bob Kellemen and Kevin Carson, BCCB (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 34–50. In this chapter, Reju expounds on a few biblical passages (1 Pet 5; Ezek 34; John 10) to demonstrate that counseling is as essential to pastoral ministry as preaching. Nonetheless, the chapter is not an academic work but an invitation for pastors to counseling ministry.

Lastly, Paul Tautges's *Discipling the Flock: A Call to Faithful Shepherding* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2018) is a relevant handbook that treats the theme of pastoral counseling from a discipleship standpoint. Tautges's approach is expositional and pastoral. He explains the importance of shepherding Christians through the pastor's preaching and discipleship (counseling) ministry. Nevertheless, accommodating to the needs of a broad Christian audience, the book is academically insufficient and does not answer the essential questions that I raise concerning counseling, such as Who are the shepherds? What is the role of pastors and elders in the local church counseling ministry? How are pastoral and lay counseling different?

[54] Adams shares his concern about the modern pastoral theology, claiming, "There has been revival of interest in the theology of pastoral activity, particularly among liberal and neo-orthodox writers. While the interest must be welcomed, one cannot refrain from observing that the conclusions reached by beginning with unscriptural views of God and man have been universally unsatisfactory. On the other hand, many conservative writers have all but failed to recognize the implications of theology in writing about pastoral care. Often unwittingly, they have applied themselves to the task with fuzzy or erroneous theological thinking that ends in similarly unacceptable results. Others, attempting to bypass theological and exegetical questions while concentrating upon practical matters, have not fared much better." Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock*, 1.

the renewed interest in pastoral theology among liberal and conservative theologians, he was concerned about their unbiblical views of God and humanity that could ultimately lead to dangerous results. Thus, he did not intend to present a new pastoral care model. Instead, he endeavored to renew the biblical pastoral paradigm relevant to the modern generation through the Reformed interpretation of the Bible. For this reason, he made his methodology for practical theology clear in the introduction of his book *Shepherding God's Flock*:

> The only proper basis for Christian living and pastoral ministry is biblical and theological. . . . While theological thought must never divorce itself from the questions asked in contemporary society, neither may the practical theologians ignore the biblical and theological answers hammered out by careful exegesis and debate over the centuries. . . . The pursuit of Practical Theology, therefore, must be seen as the study and application of the biblical means of expressing one's theology.[55]

Derek Tidball, an evangelical Baptist pastoral theologian, also observes the importance of recognizing the tension between doctrine and pastoral practice in developing pastoral theology. He claims, "Pastoral theology . . . properly relates to the interface between theology and Christian doctrine on the one hand, and pastoral experience and care on the other; as such, it is found to be a discipline in tension. It is not theology in the abstract, but theology seen from the shepherding perspective."[56] Notably, he considers the "shepherding perspective" as a hermeneutical lens through which pastoral theology could effectively translate doctrines into practical applications. He claims,

> The shepherding perspective may well inform and question the theology, but more fundamentally, the theology will inform and question the work of the shepherd, and that relationship must not be reversed. This will give the pastoral dimension of the life of the church a secure starting point and will prevent it from going off on all sorts of tangents.[57]

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[55] Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock,* 1.

[56] Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds*, 24.

[57] Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds*, 24.

In a simple diagram, Tidball's pastoral theology methodology may look like this:

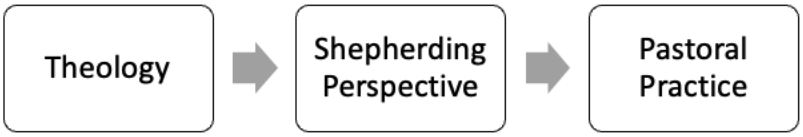

Figure 1. Derek Tidball's pastoral theology methodology

The entire process is comparable to language translation from Ancient Greek to modern English. A direct, word-for-word approach would not suffice in such a translation, as the two languages have significant grammatical and cultural variations. A translator must comprehensively understand both languages and cultures to ensure the text is translated accurately and without altering its intended meaning. Thus, to ensure that the text is meaningful for modern-day English speakers, it is essential to have an intermediary translation process that takes into account both the source and target languages.

In this line of thinking, one can argue that Tidball's concept of shepherding perspective serves as an intermediary translation or hermeneutical process for pastoral theology to comprehend biblical doctrines and form pastoral practices for modern-day contexts without losing intended theological meaning.[58]

Tidball's pastoral theology approach is similar to Timothy Keller's "theological vision" concept in forming ministry practice. Borrowing from Richard Lints's theological methodology, Keller asserts, "Between one's doctrinal belief and ministry practice should be a well-conceived *vision* for how to bring the gospel to bear on

[58] Even though all three stages should be appropriately studied, one could argue that the interpretative process is the main task of pastoral theology.

the particular cultural setting and historical moment."[59] He warns that while Christian ministry should be founded on doctrines, transferring it to a modern setting for practice without a theological interpretation process could lead to "unfruitful" or even dangerous results. Keller, therefore, argues that there must be middleware between hardware (doctrine) and software (practice), and he calls it "theological vision." Specifically, according to Keller, theological vision is "a faithful restatement of the gospel with rich implications for life, ministry, and mission in a type of culture at the moment in history."[60] In other words, "a theological vision is a vision for what you are going to *do* with your doctrine in a particular time and place."[61] This definition is helpful since it explains the goal of the theological translation process in pastoral theology, as suggested by Tidball. Instead of directly importing theological indicatives and imperatives from Scripture to the modern setting for ministry, pastoral theologians must first create faithful statements of the doctrines in light of the contemporary context and culture.

According to this perspective, the BCM's assertion that "pastors are biblical counselors and equippers of biblical counselors" should be viewed as the movement's "theological vision" that applies biblical teachings regarding pastors' identity and function in the personal ministry of the Word within the church to the contemporary context. In other words, the claim is not a practical guideline for the pastoral counseling ministry but a "shepherding perspective" that enables the translation of doctrines concerning pastoral care and counseling within the local church for today. Thus, by embracing this theological vision, pastors and theologians can have a hermeneutical lens to produce practical guidelines suitable for their specific pastoral context.

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[59] Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 17.

[60] Keller, *Center Church*, 19.

[61] Keller, *Center Church*, 19.

Lints offers an important observation about the effect of a theological vision: "A theological vision allows [people] to see their culture in a way different than they had ever been able to see it before. . . . Those empowered by the theological vision do not simply stand against the mainstream impulses of the culture but take the initiative to understand and speak to that culture from the framework of the Scriptures."[62] This insight certainly has been true for the BCM. This particular theological vision of the BCM has substantially changed how pastors and laypeople perceive the role of pastors as biblical counselors and equippers of biblical counselors. Consider the numerous publications published concerning this topic, as mentioned in the previous section of this chapter (An Overview of the BCM's Claim). Before the emergence of the movement, many Protestant pastors and Christians did not consider pastors to be counselors, believing that counseling work should be left to the professionals. However, with the advent of the BCM's theological vision, many have come to view pastors in a different light, recognizing them as more than just preachers.

The theological vision has motivated biblical counselors to encourage pastors to assume responsibility for the private ministry of the Word and create practical ministry guidelines for pastors and churches. These practical ministries must continue, but for further improvement, they must be scrutinized and evaluated against Scripture to develop a more sophisticated practical model for the future. Furthermore, it is essential to note that the role of Scripture extends beyond being a mere standard for evaluating the legitimacy of current theology and practices for Christian counseling. Instead, it serves as a dynamic influence that ought to persistently mold and shape them in the present through faithful exegetical efforts.[63] Tidball asserts, "The shepherding perspective may

[62] Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 316–17.

[63] Jones makes a significant claim regarding this point, which encapsulates the foundational epistemological and hermeneutical stance of biblical counseling theology: "Unlike those who practice other versions of Christian counseling that merely mention Bible verses or themes, biblical counselors believe the

well inform and question the theology, but more fundamentally, the theology will inform and question the work of the shepherd, *and that relationship must not be reversed*."[64] For this reason, the movement must conduct thorough biblical-theological studies to not only assess the vision itself but also to scrutinize the current practices that have resulted from it and new practices that might and should emerge from those studies when we face new counseling problems. By doing so, the movement can facilitate further theological and practical growth.

Examining the BCM's Claim from Three Angles

This section will explore the theological foundations of the BCM's statement that pastors should serve as both biblical counselors and equippers of biblical counselors. The examination will be conducted from three different conceptual angles. The first two sections will delve into the anthropological and epistemological arguments that support the idea of pastors as biblical counselors and equippers of biblical counselors. Finally, the most significant part of this analysis will be an ecclesiological perspective that explains the BCM's reasoning behind pastors serving in these dual roles.

Anthropological Perspective of the Claim

In contrast to the integrationist movement, which functionally advocates the trichotomous human nature, biblical counseling has emphatically asserted the dichotomous anthropology (spirit and body) since the beginning of its movement, adhering to Reformed theology. Biblical counselors continue to reject the distinction between spirit and psyche, identifying the "spirit" or "heart" as the core governing aspect

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Bible actively *drives* our theory and practice. It's not merely our foundation or standard. It's more than a judicial court that makes no policy, passes no legislation, and executes no events. It's more than a referee who merely reacts to rule violations by blowing a whistle; the Bible is an active player who dominates the field and needs no referee." Robert D. Jones, "What Is Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling?," in Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 15.

[64] Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds*, 24. Here, "the shepherding perspective" could be equated to "theological vision."

of a person. The BCM's presupposition is not that all problems are exclusively spiritual but have "a spiritual core," as Heath Lambert claims.[65] This particular theological anthropology is also Adams's premise for claiming the pastor as the ultimate soul care expert while arguing against the need for secular psychotherapists.[66] He regards pastors as qualified counselors since they are trained in the Bible and appointed by the church to counsel the spiritual needs of those under their care.

Since the beginning of the movement, Adams emphasized that the Bible limits human problems to only two natures: biological and spiritual. He asserted,

> The Scriptures plainly speak of both organically based problems as well as those problems that stem from sinful attitudes and behavior; but where, in all of God's Word is there so much as a trace of any third source of problems? . . . Until . . . a demonstration is forthcoming, the only safe course to follow is to declare with all of Scripture that the genesis of such human problems is twofold, not threefold."[67]

Because biblical counselors believe that humans are composed of spirit and body, psychotherapists who separate and treat a supposed third distinct entity known as the "soul" or "psyche" that is different than the spirit (or heart) are not only superfluous but also unqualified to counsel and assist people. That means if all human problems are rooted in the spirit and nothing else, pastors are the true experts because they specialize in spiritual matters.[68]

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[65] Heath Lambert, "Introduction: The Sufficiency of Scripture, the Biblical Counseling Movement, and the Purpose of the Book," in *Counseling the Hard Cases: True Stories Illustrating the Sufficiency of God's Resources in Scripture*, ed. Stuart Scott and Heath Lambert (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2012), 9.

[66] Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling*, Jay Adams Library (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 10.

[67] Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 29.

[68] The theological anthropology of the BCM is best described as "holistic dualism." Dualistic holism posits that while the body and soul are distinct, they are interconnected, forming a unified whole. This concept finds support in Genesis 2:7, which portrays humans not as possessing a soul but as being a soul—a singular entity comprising both physical body and spirit. The occurrence of death serves as significant evidence that the body and spirit can be separated. This division is further underscored in resurrection passages such as Isaiah 26:19, Daniel 12:2, 1 Thessalonians 4:15-16, and 1 Corinthians 15:23-24. These texts affirm the distinction between body and spirit. Once separated from the body through death, the spirit will be reunited with the body upon the return of Christ. In this biblical-theological framework, the BCM adheres to dualistic holism. For a brief introduction to dualistic holism, refer to Cooper, John W. "The Current Body-Soul Debate: A Case for Dualistic Holism: The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology." The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology 13, no. 2 (2009): 32–50.

If biblical counselors reject the philosophical concept that integrationists call "soul" or "psyche," how do they perceive the cognitive and emotional aspects of the internal human functions? They believe that psychological mechanisms such as human cognition and emotion are part of the human spirit or heart but not separate entities.[69] According to Lilly Park, the BCM believes that "the heart encompasses all aspects of human nature that is not physical, such as cognitions, emotions, desires, and will."[70] That is to say, the heart is the control tower of a human being where all intricate internal processes coincide. For this reason, the BCM emphasizes the heart as the central concept in their anthropological framework.[71]

As a result, biblical counselors believe that sin and its effects on the heart are the fundamental causes of human distress unless an organic condition is a cause.[72] All other prescriptions outside of this anthropological framework are unbiblical. As Kristin Kellen claims, "[Human] Disorder is inextricably tied to sin in all its presentations. . . . To simplify disorders to only one of these fails to understand the complexity of a counselee's struggle and the path toward growth and change."[73] Thus, assuming a holistic view of the heart, the BCM believes that changing the heart impacts all components of

[69] In the Bible, the heart, soul, and spirit are used interchangeably. See Adams's and Pierre's explanations on the subject in the following publications: Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 114–17; Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), 11–28.

[70] Lilly Hae Park, "A Comparative Analysis of Theological Anthropologies in Selected Christian Counseling Models" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016), 116.

[71] Adams stated, "The fact of the matter is that discussion of the scriptural notion of the heart is quite illuminating (and important to counselors), and until it is fully grasped, there can be no real understanding of human nature (and especially the spiritual aspect of it)." Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 113. The concept of the heart was further developed throughout the movement by the next generation of biblical counselors. However, since this section focuses on pastoral counseling, one will not get into it in depth.

[72] Adams claims, "There are, in the Scripture, only three specified sources of personal problems in living: demonic activity (principally possession), personal sin, and organic illness. These three are interrelated. All options are covered under these heads, leaving no room for a fourth: non-organic mental illness." Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual*, 9.

[73] Kristin L. Kellen, "Anthropology: How Should We View People?," in Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 67.

human internal functions (e.g., desires, imagination, emotions). In other words, spiritual transformation encompasses holistic restoration since the heart is the essence of human nature.[74]

For biblical counselors, the most fundamental counseling problems are sin and suffering, which is the inherent consequences of life in a fallen world. Thus, the counseling goal is to help individuals experience salvation and progressive sanctification found in Christ. Winston Smith asserts, "Christ did not come simply to rescue one-third of my being and contract the rest of it out to the psychological and medical professions. Christ came to redeem me from my fallen nature as it pervades the way I think, the way I feel, what I do, in my bodily existence."[75] So, the key to transforming lives is to transform hearts through the gospel, and, as Adams argues, there is no personal problem of the believers that the Word and Spirit cannot redeem in biblical counseling.[76] Nevertheless, change is complex and requires committed, trained, and authorized individuals to carry out this ministry as spiritual shepherds and counselors. The Bible claims those individuals are the pastors/elders (Acts 20:17–38; Eph 4:11; 1 Pet 5:2–4; Titus 1:5–13).

Therefore, Powlison claims, "Counseling per se is not like medical doctoring. It is pastoring. It is discipling."[77] Transforming lives is not instantaneous but requires years of faithful shepherding and discipleship. The BCM, therefore, claims that Christ

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[74] According to Jeremy Lelek, "Adams considered the heart important, but the means of change tended to be more (though not exclusively) behaviorally oriented via repentance and obedience to God. For Powlison and his colleagues, their earlier works emphasized, among other things, the heart's inner workings." Jeremy Lelek, *Biblical Counseling Basics: Roots, Beliefs, and Future* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2018), 30.

[75] Winston Smith, "Dichotomy or Trichotomy? How the Doctrine of Man Shapes the Treatment of Depression," *JBC* 18, no. 3 (2000): 22.

[76] Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 177. Adams claims, "When doing true counseling—i.e., working with saved persons to enable them to make changes, at a level of depth that pleases God—it is possible to solve any true counseling problem (i.e., any problem involving love for God and one's neighbor). Such assurance stems from the fact that all the resources necessary for change are available in the Word and by the Spirit."

[77] Powlison, "The Pastor as Counselor," 26.

has called and gifted pastors to do this particular work (Eph 4:11–12). Specifically, pastors are appointed and authorized by the church to formally help the flock experience transformation of the heart through the faithful ministry of the gospel at both public (preaching) and private (counseling) levels with the help of the Holy Spirit. Thus, Adams said, "Fundamentally, then, pastoral counseling is helping Christians to become sanctified. . . . This is the shepherd's challenge, opportunity, and duty."[78] He also called pastors to the work of counseling:

> Pastors have often been told (and their parishioners have often thought), "The person's problem is much too deep for a pastor to handle. He will need professional help. I'll have to send him to a psychiatrist." My friends, it ought to be the other way around. The only person who can really operate at a level of depth is the person who knows how to go to the heart of a man's problem. That's because the heart is the man's problem. The only way to go to the heart of a man's problems is through the gospel of Jesus Christ. . . . And—never forget this—in such work, the pastor is the professional—God's professional.[79]

Nevertheless, the pastors are not the only ones called to care for and disciple God's flock alone. According to Ephesians 4:15, God envisions every saint speaking the "truth" to one another in love. Jones explains, "The "truth" in Ephesians is the gospel message (1:13; 4:21; 6:14). . . . Rather than being some proverbial guideline on how to say hard things in nice ways honestly, this refers to the whole church speaking gospel truths and applications to one another."[80] So, even though pastors are the authorized counselors of the church, biblical counselors believe that all saints are called to participate in the ministry of counseling one another. For this ministry of mutual care, the pastors are specifically called to equip and train the entire body of Christ (Eph 4:11–16).

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[78] Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 77.

[79] Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 310.

[80] Jones, "Who Can and Should Do Biblical Counseling?," in Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 27.

John Henderson, a pastor who oversaw the Equipped to Counsel ministry at Denton Bible Church in Denton, Texas, summarizes the objective of equipping the saints for counseling:

> We want to see growth in theology/truth/biblical knowledge and practical implications of these content areas; understanding the gospel and how it speaks to daily life and struggles; understanding people and how to love, listen, and encourage them; common errors or false teachings that assault sound biblical counseling and how to answer these from Scripture.[81]

Henderson has a PhD in psychology, but as a convert to biblical counseling, he does not mention the need for secular psychological training for lay counselors because he functions under an anthropological framework of biblical counseling. Thus, more than anything, he stresses the importance of teaching lay counselors how to apply biblical truth to life's issues.

An important implication of the anthropological perspective of the pastor as a biblical counselor and the equipper of biblical counselors is his qualification as a shepherd. Along with the pastor/elder qualifications listed in Titus 1:5–9, 1 Timothy 3:1–7, and 1 Peter 5:1–4, a crucial qualification of a pastor is his competence in theology and the ability to apply it to various life issues, including heart issues.[82] Since biblical counsel depends upon biblical principles, he must understand all that "the scriptures say on a given topic in order to give fully biblical direction to their counselees"[83] and also train lay biblical counselors to do the same. The ability to thoroughly understand systematic and biblical theology and examine and interpret everything via theological lenses to apply it to particular situations is not something an average layperson could do competently.

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[81] Kellemen, *Equipping Biblical Counselors*, 193–94. Kellemen interviewed Henderson in this book. John Henderson is also a biblical counseling professor at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

[82] Adams asserted, "In its simplest form, theology is nothing more or less than the systematic understanding of what the Scriptures teach about various subjects." Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 11.

[83] Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 12.

Therefore, God called and gifted shepherds in the body of Christ to carry out this challenging task with diligence and competence.

Epistemological Perspective of the Claim

Biblical counselors believe that God continues to counsel and shepherd his people today through his all-sufficient Word and Spirit. To accomplish this, the Chief Shepherd (Jesus Christ) has also given the church human shepherds (pastors and elders) to counsel and lead his sheep through the public and private ministry of the Word. In addition, pastors are called to cultivate a culture of care in which the laity is equipped to speak the truth to one another in all circumstances and help each other live according to God's truth. In that sense, many biblical counselors believe that the pastors must labor as biblical counselors and the equippers of biblical counselors because "without shepherds, the church cannot function as a culture of care."[84]

Although not a biblical counselor, Dru Johnson claims in *Scripture's Knowing* that true knowledge is not limited to intellectual understanding or acquiring information but involves a personal encounter with God through the Holy Spirit.[85] In other words, he argues that as created beings, we depend on the Creator's knowledge and counsel to find the right answers to life's critical questions, including, as Ed Welch notes, "Who is God? Who am I? Who are these people?"[86] In the same line of thinking, Adams claimed,

> From the beginning, human change depended upon counseling. Man was created as a being whose very existence is derived from and dependent upon a Creator whom he must acknowledge as such and from whom he must obtain wisdom and knowledge through revelation. The purpose and meaning of his life, as well as his

[84] Johnson, *The Church as a Culture of Care*, 116.

[85] Dru Johnson, *Scripture's Knowing: A Companion to Biblical Epistemology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015).

[86] Edward T. Welch, *What Do You Think of Me? Why Do I Care? Answers to the Big Questions of Life* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2011), 21.

> very existence, is derived and dependent. He can find none of this in himself. Man is not autonomous.[87]

Contrary to secular or postmodern understanding, which promotes the self-created meaning for life, Adams claimed that "the Bible teaches that man was made for God (Rev. 4:11) and dependent upon Him (Acts 17:28)."[88] Thus, he believed that any attempt to create meaning beyond God's revelation would not only cause distress and confusion in life but reveals rebellion against the Creator God, who created us as dependent creatures.

In this scheme, biblical counseling is not about applying man-made psychotherapeutic methods to help the sufferers but about delivering God's true counsel and wisdom to the counselees' particular situations so they may live in obedience and harmony with God. For this reason, the counselor must articulate God's vision of reality to a counselee and offer a biblical response to their dilemmas.[89] Through this effort, they help counselees to have a godly vision of life, knowing who they are, what is wrong with their lives, how they can be made right with God, and for what purpose they should live.

How can we then know God's knowledge and counsel for his people? The BCM firmly believes that humanity has access to God's counsel because he has spoken to them through Scripture. Adams claimed the biblical counselor "has a Book that is the very Word of the living God."[90] The Bible is the inerrant Word of God written by inspired writers (2 Tim 3:16) that humanity could depend on to find divine counsel. Adams also said, "When God says that he breathed out his Word, he means that what is

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[87] Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 1.

[88] Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 1.

[89] Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 16.

[90] Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 17.

written is as much his Word as if he had spoken audibly by means of breath."[91] Therefore, when a Christian reads the Bible, he encounters God's Word and nothing less.

Evangelicals do not disagree with the BCM's conviction in the inerrancy of Scripture. They uphold it along with other doctrines concerning Scripture, such as the authority and infallibility of Scripture. However, as we have seen from the previous section, some evangelical proponents of integrationism do not believe that Scripture sufficiently explains the details of human psychology for counseling. Therefore, they believe we need to have the assistance of secular science to have a broader and deeper understanding of human psychology.

The doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture in relation to counseling is a point of contention among various Christian counseling models. Nevertheless, biblical counselors strongly argue that Scripture is sufficient for counseling. Lambert claims, "God gave us a Bible that is sufficient for counseling and does not need to be supplemented by the findings of common grace. Believers need common grace when it comes to numerous areas in life, but not when it comes to developing counseling approaches."[92] This does not mean they disregard and ignore scientific progress.[93] Instead, they appreciate these discoveries and critically evaluate them as secondary or tertiary sources for understanding human psychology and behavior while acknowledging their humanistic presuppositions. Nevertheless, they believe God never intended common

[91] Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 17.

[92] Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 100.

[93] For example, consider what Adams said about extrabiblical sources: "I do not wish to disregard science, but I welcome it as a useful adjunct to illustrate, filling in generalizations with specifics, and challenging wrong human interpretations of Scripture, thereby forcing the student to restudy the Scriptures. However, in the area of psychiatry, science largely has given way to humanistic and gross speculations." Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, xxi. Also, see David Powlison's suggestions about engaging with extrabiblical sources from "Modern Therapies and the Church's Faith." In this article, he suggests helpful ways to critically engage with discoveries found in secular sources while understanding their humanistic presuppositions. David Powlison, "Modern Therapies and the Church's Faith," *JBC* 15, no. 1 (1996): 32–41.

grace to solve life's problems. Instead, he intends Jesus Christ, revealed in the Bible, to fulfill that purpose.[94]

Epistemologically speaking, this does not mean that biblical counselors believe that the Bible is exhaustive or written in an encyclopedic format to provide sufficient information for all topics concerning human problems—e.g., hyperthyroidism or neurochemical issues. However, they believe that Scripture is sufficient for all things pertaining to life and doctrine, especially concerning our salvation and sanctification.[95] As Lambert explains, Scripture is sufficient for counseling—leading men and women to repentance and a new life in Christ that bears the fruits of the Spirit, such as love, joy, and peace, through the means of personal conversations (Gal 5:22–23; 1 Thess 5:11; Heb 3:13).[96]

Biblical counselors believe that the Bible's teaching about how Jesus saves and sanctifies individuals from sin is more significant than unbelievers' intellectual knowledge concerning human psychology. They believe that troubled individuals ultimately need Scripture to demonstrate Jesus and his specific grace in salvation, not just helpful insights sometimes found in various secular psychotherapies. Powlison asserts that Scripture is "comprehensively sufficient" for counseling; it "guides the questions asked in data gathering; it explains and exposes the motives. . . . it maps out in detail the way of peacemaking."[97] Powlison also refers to "the psychology of Jesus" as the standard for diagnosing defects and understanding true human nature.[98] Christians can gain a healthy perspective on reality by studying Jesus's desires, thoughts, emotions, and

[94] Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 100.

[95] Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 16–18.

[96] Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 51–52.

[97] David Powlison, "Critiquing Modern Integrationists," *JBC* 11, no. 3 (1993): 27.

[98] David Powlison, "Cure of Souls and the Modern Psychotherapies," in *The Biblical Counseling Movement: History and Context* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2010), 22.

behaviors throughout the Bible. Hence, Scripture is the source of knowledge for knowing who we are and how to counsel those who are suffering. For this reason, in *Seeing with New Eyes*, Powlison cites Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who exposes Christian's deep understanding of human problems and solutions discovered through Scripture:

> The most experienced psychologist or observer of human nature knows infinitely less of the human heart than the simplest Christian who lives beneath the Cross of Jesus. The greatest psychological insight, ability, and experience cannot grasp this one thing: what sin is. Worldly wisdom knows what distress and, weakness, and failure are, but it does not know the godlessness of man. And so it also does not know that man is destroyed only by his sin and can be healed only by forgiveness.[99]

In light of everything that has been said concerning the BCM's epistemology, pastors play a crucial role in the church's life because the Bible says they are charged with shepherding God's people through the Word. For this reason, the Bible calls pastors "pastor-teachers" or "shepherd-teachers" (Eph 4:11).[100] Regarding this, Adams says, "God has given (1) the ordained teaching and ruling officers (2) the task of changing people's lives (3) through the authoritative ministry of the Word (II Tim. 3:15–17)."[101] Through both private and public ministry of the Word, they help the believers understand God's will, biblically interpret their situations, and apply the gospel's message to their lives.

This does not mean that the pastors are the only ultimate authority for interpreting Scripture, or that lay Christians cannot understand the Bible without the clergy, as Roman Catholics would claim. In fact, as Protestants, biblical counselors believed that the Reformation returned the Bible into the hands of all believers, who were

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[99] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Confession and Communion," in *Life Together* (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), 118–19, quoted in David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes: Counseling and the Human Condition through the Lens of Scripture*, Resources for Changing Lives (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003), 12.

[100] Adams explained that "the minister's teaching is viewed as distinct (but not separate) from his pastoral duties. That is to say, the two works are distinguished by the use of two terms but not in such a way that two offices composed of different personnel are in view. Rather they are viewed as two distinct but inseparable functions of one man who occupies one office." Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock*, 7.

[101] Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 278.

more than capable of understanding the clarity of Scripture. Moreover, they believed that all Christians are called to study the Scripture and exhort one another through it.[102] Nevertheless, biblical counselors believe that ordained pastors and elders, the authorized shepherd-teachers, are necessary to maintain the purity of doctrine and rightly interpret and apply the Scripture for God's flock. The Bible teaches that the sheep will go astray without the shepherding ministry of the pastor/elders (1 Kgs 22:17; Ezek 34:5; Zech 10:2). Therefore, the author of Hebrews commands, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you" (Heb 13:17, ESV).

In conclusion, biblical counselors believe that Scripture is God's inspired Word, containing divine power and counsel for fallen humanity. Through the Word, God teaches and counsels his people to discover sin as their ultimate problem and Christ as their only hope and redemption. Christ, the chief shepherd, feeds, directs, protects, and leads his flock today through his undershepherds (pastor/elders) whom the Word and Spirit guide in teaching and leading God's people to live in the truth (1 Pet 5:1–4). In that sense, Johnson claims, "The office of elder is crucial to the flourishing of the church as a culture of care. The church is made up of broken people who need to grow in maturity, and God provides them with shepherds to minister his Word in order to make them complete in Christ."[103] The details of the pastoral ministry in the life of the church will be discussed in the following section.

[102] The theology of mutual care will be discussed further in the next section (ecclesiological perspective).

[103] Johnson, *The Church as a Culture of Care*, 115.

Ecclesiological Perspective of the Claim

To understand the claim that the pastor should serve as a biblical counselor and prepare God's people to do the same, one must examine the BCM's ecclesiological perspective on this topic. While understanding the movement's epistemology and anthropology is important, grasping its perspective on ecclesiology is the primary step to comprehending its vision and practical approach to pastoral counseling. The BCM posits that the church provides an institutional framework for caring for believers' souls. Compared to the secular mental health system, this biblical institutional system is much more comprehensive and organic in its care for God's people. Within this biblical institution, pastors are recognized as authorized biblical counselors, and the entire body of Christ joins in the ministry of care alongside the pastor. Pastors implement the vision of biblical counseling articulated in Ephesians 4 and prepare the laity to engage in the ministry of systematic community care.

Hence, this section examines in detail the ecclesiology of the BCM in relation to pastoral counseling to uncover its ecclesiological justification for the claim that pastors should serve as biblical counselors and the equippers of biblical counselors. The first two parts, "The Pastor as the Appointed Official Counselor of the Church" and "Pastoral Care as a Subdivision of Pastoral Care," help readers comprehend the BCM's presuppositional notions concerning pastoral ministry. In the following two parts, "The Church as a Counseling Community and the Pastor as the Equipper of the Saints" and "Pastoral Equipping of the Saints," the pastor's role as an equipper of biblical counselors will be examined. The following three parts, "The BCM's View on Pastoral Counseling," "Formal and Informal Counseling," and "The Authority of Pastoral Counseling," will examine the calling, duties, and authority of a biblical counselor. Lastly, "Pastoral Counseling and Para-Church Ministries" will investigate pastoral counseling in relation to biblical counseling para-church ministries.

The Pastor Is the Appointed Official Counselor of the Church

Before delving into explanations of the pastoral counseling ministry, it is worth noting that the first and next-generation biblical counseling leaders such as Adams and Powlison believed in the ordained male leadership of the church and the parity and plurality of the elders.[104] Both were conservative Presbyterians, and their writings presuppose Presbyterian church polity and the interchangeability of biblical words such as "overseers," "bishops," "elders," and "pastors/shepherd." Adams clearly explains his position in *Shepherding God's Flock*:

> The Scriptures disclose that in the thinking of the apostles there was the closest possible relationship between the words poimaino (to shepherd), poimen (a shepherd), presbuteros (an elder), episkopos (an overseer [bishop]) and episkopeo (to oversee). To carry on the work of an overseer (episkopos, "bishop") does not mean to do the work of any sort of overseer in general, but in the New Testament it always carries the idea of overseeing as a shepherd. It involves the all-embracing oversight required by the descriptions of such work in Psalm 23, John 10 and elsewhere.6 According to Acts 20:28, the Holy Spirit placed ("etheto," i.e., "set," "appointed" or "ordained") the elders (v. 17) to be "overseers" (episkopous) "among" (or "in"; Greek en) "the flock" (v. 28). As overseers, their function and duty was "to shepherd" (poimainein) the church of God.[105]

Baptist biblical counselors, a group that comprises a good portion of the BCM, seemed to have little difficulty with Adams's ecclesiological presuppositions. Even though they do not believe in a formal division between teaching and ruling elders as do the Presbyterians, they agree with Adams's theological trajectory because they, too, believe that all elders are called to shepherd the church through the ministry of the Word. It does not imply that they concur on every minor detail of their theological variations. Specifically, as congregationalists, Baptists reject the Presbyterian form of connectional government. Nevertheless, since numerous Reformed Baptists endorse the elder-led style

[104] In "The Cure of Souls," Powlison indicates that he is a part of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), a conservative Presbyterian denomination. Also, Adams was an ordained minister of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). Despite their later transition to different denominations, they have consistently upheld this perspective. David Powlison, "Cure of Souls (and the Modern Psychotherapies)," *JBC* 25, no. 2 (April 2007): 5–12.

[105] Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock*, 8.

of church governance and the significance of pastoral care, they can operate within the broad framework of Adams's principles and even establish their version of the soul care ministry for their congregations.

Pastoral Counseling as a Subdivision of Pastoral Care

For the BCM, pastoral counseling is an integral part of the broader pastoral care ministry rather than an isolated activity. As ordained ministers, pastors and elders have various shepherding responsibilities each week. They are in charge of administration, leading worship, preaching, visiting the sick, praying for the saints, and much more. Counseling is only one aspect of pastoral care, and as Adams noted, it "is a special, but not separate, area of pastoral activity."[106] As a result, the BCM views pastoral counseling as an extension of other pastoral care ministries operating within their dynamic relationships. So, pastoral care is a broader concept encompassing a wide range of shepherding ministries caring for individuals and communities. For this reason, Bill Goode argues that "the pastor needs to be involved in counseling, but it must be a balanced involvement. If the pastor pursues counseling to the neglect of his sermon preparation and study, his preaching will no doubt suffer, causing more counseling problems rather than strengthening the saints and furthering the maturation process."[107] This is not the only example in which one aspect of pastoral care impacts another. Since they are all organically connected, if any part of pastoral care is neglected, it will have a ripple effect on the others.

How should a pastor maintain balance in his pastoral ministry? Specifically, how much of his time should be devoted to counseling? Powlison suggests that pastors should allocate a portion of their weekly hours to counseling, and this percentage should

[106] Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock*, 172.

[107] William W. Goode, "Biblical Counseling and the Local Church," in *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically*, ed. John MacArthur and Wayne A. Mack (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 223–24.

be thoughtfully considered. He emphasizes that while pastors need to make time for counseling, it is even more crucial to prioritize it for those needing the most attention. He states, "What percentage of time should a pastor give to counseling? Some percentage. And make sure that some percent of that percentage is given to people who will never be leaders."[108]

Although counseling is essential to pastoral care, most lead pastors can only meet with a few members weekly due to their busy schedules. This is the reality of pastoral ministry, and this is why biblical counselors argue that pastors should equip every member to serve and participate in the soul-care ministry of the church. As discussed above, biblical counselors also believe that pastors should work to establish formal and informal biblical counseling ministries so that every member may work alongside the pastor. Deepak Reju and Jeremy Pierre suggest that pastors should start by building a culture of discipleship in their churches.[109] Instead of emphasizing soul care ministry only in lay counseling training sessions, they suggest pastors highlight the importance of one-another discipleship and biblical counseling in all church ministries until they become ingrained in the church's DNA.

The Church as a Counseling Community and the Pastor as the Equipper of the Saints

The BCM claims that, based on the NT teachings (e.g., Gal 6:1–2; Col 3:16; 1 Thess 5:11), the church is where biblical counseling ministry will most meaningfully happen and thrive.[110] In 1 Timothy 3:15, Paul describes the church as the "household of God" and a "pillar and buttress of the truth." In other words, God intends the church to be a place that upholds and lives out the truth through the faithful teachings of his Word. To

[108] David Powlison, *Speaking Truth in Love: Counsel in Community* (Winston-Salem, NC: Punch Press, 2005), 120.

[109] Pierre and Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling*, 114.

[110] Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 316.

accomplish this, God calls and appoints elders and pastors to teach the Word through both preaching and counseling ministries (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:1–4; Heb 13:17). Pastoral responsibility for biblical counseling extends to equipping and training other members of the church so that they can also minister the Word of the truth (the gospel) through counseling and discipleship with one another (Eph 4:11–16). In this line of thinking, biblical counseling ministry flourishes within the local church context, where the pastor actively leads the soul care ministry and equips all members to participate. Just as a seed requires fertile soil to reach maturity, biblical counseling needs the church as the appropriate context to promote growth in God's people.

For this reason, from the beginning of the BCM, Adams's vision was to restore counseling to the church (away from the secular mental health system). According to Powlison,

> Adams's redefinition of the counseling task as explicitly "pastoral" brought with it a number of institutional ramifications. Expert authority in the personal problems jurisdiction needed to be relocated to pastors and pastoral theologians. . . . He claimed that people needed a pastoral cure-of-souls, not the ersatz of psychotherapy or psychiatry. Such counseling practice needed to be relocated into local churches—away from hospitals and professional offices.[111]

For Adams, the pastor and church were the primary institutions "intended to replace the characteristic institutions of America's twentieth-century mental health system."[112] However, as Powlison noted, "Adams little developed what the counseling of these lay Christians might look like, but he issued the rhetorical call."[113]

Nonetheless, the ecclesiological counseling model was further developed through next-generation biblical counselors. While at the beginning of the movement, Adams mainly focused on the authority of pastoral counseling over secular psychotherapists, the next generation of biblical counselors highlighted the church as a

[111] Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement*, 2.

[112] Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement*, 2.

[113] Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement*, 131.

community of soul care. For instance, Powlison stressed the familial model of biblical counseling described in 1 Thessalonians 5. He critiqued secular psychotherapy driven by a medical metaphor while arguing that the biblical counseling model is familial. He claimed, "As we listen to 1 Thessalonians as a whole, it becomes clear that the letter portrays—and calls for—a familial paradigm for understanding the 'counselor-counselee' relationship."[114] This was not a new way of explaining the institutional structure of biblical counseling in the church but rather an attempt to bring attention to an already existing perspective that first-generation biblical counselors may not have highlighted enough.[115]

The BCM's ecclesiological and communal counseling model radically differs from secular psychotherapy. For instance, secular psychotherapy often treats individuals with personal struggles as a medical issue handled in private therapy sessions. Instead, biblical counseling sees the care of the soul as a community responsibility to be handled within the church (Gal 6:1–2; Col 3:16). Biblical counselors advocate for a humble and cautious approach within the church, where members can counsel and support one another as a close-knit family. This fosters mutual growth and maturity in Christ, emphasizing unity as a unified body (Matt 18:15–17; Eph 4:11–16).[116]

In that sense, authenticity is paramount for promoting mutual care within the local church. As Brad Bigney and Steve Viars emphasize in "A Church *of* Biblical Counseling," to facilitate the growth of the body of Christ through biblical counseling, individuals should prioritize their relationship with Christ and their personal need for him

[114] David Powlison, "Familial Counseling: The Paradigm for Counselor-Counselee Relationships in 1 Thessalonians 5," *JBC* 25, no. 1 (2007): 2.

[115] In "Familial Counseling," Powlison explains that there are three ways to understand biblical counseling—the ministry model, pastoral care model, and mutual care model. These models are not isolated approaches to biblical counseling but rather interrelated perspectives that provide a comprehensive understanding of the system as a whole.

[116] Lelek, *Biblical Counseling Basics*, 168. This does not mean that biblical counseling ignores the importance of confidentiality. Refer to "A Familial Approach to Confidentiality in the Church" by Steve Midgley for a typical biblical counselour's view on confidentiality. Steve Midgley, "A Familial Approach to Confidentiality in the Church," *JBC* 31, no. 3 (2017): 45–59.

over concern about how others perceive them. In a church environment where authenticity is valued, fellow believers comfort and encourage those suffering by pointing them toward Christ. They continually remind each other of God's holiness and power to transform lives through grace while openly confessing their sins as fellow saints, sufferers, and sinners. If they observe a fellow believer giving in to worldly temptations, they intervene to guide them back to Christ (Gal 6:1–2). Additionally, the community members serve one another by speaking truth in love to nurture growth as one church in Christ. Thus, Jeremy Lelek is correct in saying that for biblical counselors, "Wise counseling is not individual self-improvement but builds the community of faith and love."[117]

Pastoral Equipping of the Saints to Serve in the Ministry of Mutual Care

All biblical counselors who have written about the ecclesiastical aspect of counseling cite Ephesians 4:12–16 as the foundational text for the particular model.[118] For example, Bigney and Viars describe it as a "delightful passage describing the local church."[119] They claim that the passage's focus is the doctrine of progressive sanctification in which Paul emphasizes the importance of spiritual growth for individuals and the entire local church. According to this perspective, the passage also indicates that "soul care," which includes counseling and discipleship, is a responsiblity for the entire church, not simply a select group of leaders. Therefore, adhering to Ephesians 4, biblical counselors assert that every congregation should exemplify this

[117] Lelek, *Biblical Counseling Basics*, 169.

[118] Tautges, *Discipling the Flock*; Kellemen, *Equipping Biblical Counselors*; Johnson, *The Church as a Culture of Care*.

[119] Brad Bigney and Steve Viars, "A Church *of* Biblical Counseling," in Kellemen and Carson, *Biblical Counseling and the Church*, 21.

biblical model of care, turning the church into a counseling center rather than just having a counseling ministry.

Within Ephesians 4's ecclesial paradigm, Paul claims that Christ gave the church some to be pastor-teachers (shepherd-teachers) to build up the body of Christ through the mutual ministry of the Word (Eph 4:11–13). Their work as shepherds is to equip saints to counsel and disciple one another. In other words, a pastor is called to minister to the saints and train them to learn how to do it with him. For example, instead of a pastor handling every marital counseling case, he should train older and mature couples to counsel and walk along with younger couples going through conflicts and struggles. Also, instead of a pastor discipling every young man in the church, he should train older men to become disciple-makers themselves. This is because "ministry is the work of the church, the everyday saints, and not just those with a special calling or professional training."[120]

The pastor's equipping ministry for soul care does not imply that all members should become professional biblical counselors. The BCM has indeed argued that every believer is a counselor. However, that does not mean that all are "called or qualified to do formal counseling with individuals struggling with very difficult forms of sin and suffering."[121] In fact, some people may not be gifted or mature enough to provide formal counseling. Hence, the BCM asserts that all lay members should be able to provide informal counseling and care while properly trained pastors, elders, and specially trained lay counselors perform formal counseling.[122] In that respect, the pastors are called to equip and engage every believer in various soul-care ministries in the church to serve with their unique gifts and calling.

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[120] Viars and Bigney, "A Church *of* Biblical Counseling," 24.

[121] Johnson, *The Church as a Culture of Care*, 151.

[122] "Properly-trained" assumes that they have received biblical counseling training either through a seminary or a certificating organization (e.g., ABC or ACBC) .

Here are some examples that biblical counselors frequently use to explain the pastors' equipping ministry for counseling in the church, which Jones demonstrates in a well-organized manner:

> 1. Through public preaching and teaching, they show members how to interpret and apply Scripture to their personal struggles.
>
> 2. Through their pastoral prayers and wise song selection for corporate worship, they guide God's people in how to think about and approach God.
>
> 3. Through counseling members, especially in the presence of a small group leader or a godly friend of the counselee, they show others how to reproduce measures of their ministry.
>
> 4. Through testifying how biblical counseling truths are transforming their lives, they help members do the same.
>
> 5. Through recommending and displaying sound biblical counseling resources, they provide timely, life-transforming resources to members for their use and for helping each other.
>
> 6. Through providing formal biblical counseling training within their churches as the church is able. Qualified men and women can assist in or lead this training, especially those with advanced biblical counseling training (e.g., a master's degree in biblical counseling). Pastors can also encourage members to pursue other trusted avenues of biblical counseling training at seminaries, Bible colleges, Christian training centers, conferences, on-the-road events, and by watching video curriculum.[123]

As Jones lists, the equipping ministry of the pastor takes many different forms under the umbrella of general pastoral ministry. So, it is vital for pastors to utilize various opportunities to train God's people for the ministry of soul care.

Pastoral Counseling as the Private Ministry of the Word

Adams primarily understands the role of pastor as "pastor-teacher" in light of Ephesians 4:11. In *Shepherding God's Flock*, he claims that "the two works [pastoring and teaching] are distinguished by the use of two terms but not in such a way that two offices composed of different personnel are in view. Rather, they are viewed as two

[123] Jones, "Who Can and Should Do Biblical Counseling?" in Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 27–28.

distinct but inseparable functions of one man who occupies one office."[124] He also asserts in different passages that the Bible explains the ministries of the pastor in both inseparable functions—shepherding and teaching.[125] In other words, he believed that by virtue of his office, pastors should shepherd God's flock through the teachings of the Word.

Adams viewed that the pastor's "ministry of the Word is to be carried on both publicly and privately, just as it was by the apostles (Acts 20:20)." He also advised, "Balance must be found in the ministry of the Word. Preaching must not be neglected for counseling, and counseling must not be neglected for preaching. In truth, both are one and the same ministry, as Paul viewed it in Acts 20:20."[126] Consequently, Adams considered pastoral teaching conducted personally and publicly as essential to pastoral shepherding ministry. In that line of thinking, pastoral counseling is considered the shepherd's private ministry of the Word for the BCM.

Powlison used the term "private" ministry somewhat differently than Adams.[127] For Powlison, the private ministry of the Word referred to the private devotional study of Scripture. Thus, he referred to counseling ministry as the "interpersonal ministry of the Word."[128] Comprehensively, he viewed private, interpersonal, and public ministry of the Word as the three-legged stool ministries of the

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[124] Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock*, 7.

[125] Adams also asserted that "elsewhere the two functions [shepherding and teaching] appear as distinguishable works that together constitute the complete task of one man [pastor]." Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock*, 7. For example, "He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ" (Col 1:28); "Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other" (1 Thess 5:12–13).

[126] Jay Adams, "Balance in the Ministry of the Word," *JPP* 6, no. 2 (1983): 1.

[127] This does not mean Powlison did not use the term "private ministry of the Word" to refer to pastoral counseling. One assumes that he kept Adams's usage of term because "the private ministry of the Word" has a long Christian tradition behind it.

[128] Powlison, *Speaking Truth in Love*, 106.

church, claiming, "Ministry of the Word and gospel proclamation: if it happens in public and private, it should happen interpersonally."[129]

It is not a coincidence that Powlison used a different term for the counseling ministry than Adams. By referring to counseling ministry as the interpersonal ministry of the Word, he intended to show that the biblical pastoral counseling model is less directive and hierarchical than Adams's nouthetic model. As he explained in "Familial Counseling,"[130] pastoral counseling must be done primarily in a familial mode.[131] As an older brother lovingly counsels a younger brother who needs guidance and discipline, a pastor should first and foremost counsel his sheep in such a manner.

What are the benefits and opportunities of pastoral counseling over lay counseling? Jones explains, "Christ has given the church pastors and elders who know their members and can shepherd them in practical and immediate ways. Their position enables them to enter a counselee's world, gain trust, do the counseling (or connect the person to approved counselors), and bring proper God-given elder authority to the situation if needed."[132] Similarly, Powlison also emphasized the benefits and opportunities of pastoral counseling. He claimed that pastors already have the members' trust and expectations that they will show up when there is a problem. They also have the respect and authority that lay counselors often lack in the counselor-counselee relationship, which is essential for effective counseling. Furthermore, because the pastor

[129] Powlison, *Speaking Truth in Love*, 107.

[130] Powlison, "Familial Counseling."

[131] In number 4 of his article on "Crucial Issues in Contemporary Biblical Counseling," Powlison asserted that the confrontational and directive style of nouthetic approach needs to be infrequent in the church since it is not a primary mode of counseling. Formal nouthetic approaches are only for remedial cases that needs to bring a sinner back to Christ. See David Powlison, "Crucial Issues in Contemporary Biblical Counseling," *JPP* 9, no. 3 (1988): 65.

[132] Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 29.

has already taught them in various ministry contexts, he can provide counsel that counselees are familiar with.[133]

Formal and Informal Counseling

For biblical counselors, distinguishing formal and informal counseling is critical in understanding biblical counseling's vision of soul care and the role of pastoral counseling within the local church. Adams first introduced the distinction in his book *Ready to Restore*.[134] He claimed that informal biblical counseling is often less formal and less structured and may occur in a more conversational context. It also involves more spontaneous or impromptu counseling sessions and may not follow guidelines or a particular method. Informal biblical counseling is for all believers to participate, and it is relationship-focused and aims to help one another grow as disciples by speaking and doing the truth in love. For this reason, Kellemen calls the informal model the "every-member disciple-making ministry."[135]

In contrast, for Adams, formal counseling refers to nouthetic and more frequent modes of confrontational counseling utilized to restore sinners to Christ.[136] Also, formal counseling takes place in a formal setting where the counselee is expected to engage seriously in counseling to take care of his problem. So, in formal counseling, "the counselor leads, sits behind the desk, sets the agenda, interprets authoritatively from the Bible, confronts, encourages, and guides. The counselee provides honest data, commits

[133] Powlison, "The Pastor as Counselor," 28–34.

[134] Adams, *Ready to Restore*. Adams also mentioned the concept in *Competent to Counsel* but did not elaborate. Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 45.

[135] Kellemen, *Equipping Biblical Counselors*, 32.

[136] Adams states, "Nouthesia refers to situations in which one has brought trouble on himself by his sin, or in which he has responded sinfully to pressures or trouble that he did not generate." Jay E. Adams, *Ready to Restore*, 27 Nevertheless, Adams did not mean that nouthetic counseling can only be done in a formal setting. Adams's concept of nouthetic counseling works in both formal and informal settings.

himself to counseling, and follows the remedial steps outlined."[137] Because the counselee's failure to repent during formal counseling might result in church discipline, formal counseling is also generally viewed as remedial counseling. For this reason, in Adams's nouthetic model, formal counseling is mainly the ministry of the shepherds (pastors and elders) who are called to seek out the lost.[138]

Although the next generation of biblical counselors retained the ecclesiastical structure of Adams's model, they considered informal counseling the "primary mode" of counseling within the church, even when some do not use the term "counseling" to refer to that informal, caring ministry of God's Word to each other. They viewed formal counseling as a "backup mode," only necessary if informal counseling proved ineffective in bringing an individual to repentance from sin. Consequently, unlike the first generation that prioritized pastoral authority and frank confrontation, they focused more on developing counseling theology and strategies for informal and mutual counseling among Christians based on "God's truth in love."[139]

The Authority in Pastoral Counseling

If God calls every Christian to counsel one another mutually through the gospel, does pastoral counseling carry different authority than lay counseling? Also, can a lay counselor ever give authoritative counsel? These are essential questions to answer since counseling within the church cannot disregard the possible situation requiring church discipline. Even though this is an important issue, the BCM has not yet treated this topic adequately.

Concerning authority, Adams claims that pastors and elders are ordained to the task of changing people's lives through the "authoritative ministry of the Word (2

[137] Powlison, "Crucial Issues in Contemporary Biblical Counseling," 66.

[138] Adams, *Ready to Restore*, 15.

[139] Powlison, "Crucial Issues in Contemporary Biblical Counseling," 67.

Tim 3:15–17)."[140] When this authority is exercised correctly, under biblical principles, Christ promises to provide support, wisdom, and strength, as noted in Matthew 18:15–20. Adams asserts in *The Christian Counselor's Manual* that, to some extent, all Christian counselors "exercise the authority that Christ has conferred upon them as saints."[141] However, the difference between ordained ministers and lay counselors is that ministers are granted the externally conferred authority (*exousia*) by "virtue of their calling to the work of ministering the Word."[142] That is to say, in contrast to the lay counselors, who only have spiritual power (or authority) working through the biblical message of their counsel, external authority is given to the pastors by the church to command respect and obedience (1 Thess 5:13; Heb 13:17), while their internal power (*dunamis*) gives them the capability to perform their duties (2 Tim 1:7).

As Timothy Lane notes in his dissertation, pastoral authority plays a crucial role in pastoral counseling. He states that pastoral authority enables and permits pastors and elders to reach individuals or groups who need restoration to the body of Christ.[143] Lane explains that there is always a group of people in the church who require redemptive efforts by the shepherds to overcome the sins that have distorted their perceptions and hardened their hearts. In that sense, pastoral authority and church discipline are modeled after Christ's mission of redemption to rescue them from all hindering sins. Therefore, pastoral authority and church discipline are spiritual tools for restoration and growth. Nonetheless, the problem with church discipline is that it can be

[140] Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 278.

[141] Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual*, 15.

[142] Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 278.

[143] Lane, "Counseling in the Local Church," 222. Lane calls this group an "unsought counseling group."

neglected or abused, so understanding the biblical balance between pastoral authority and church discipline is critical.[144]

In *Competent to Counsel*, Adams stressed the value of informal peer counseling and opposed the professionalization of counseling by secular mental health organizations. He believed that all wise Christians were capable of counseling each other. However, in later works such as *Ready to Restore* and *The Christian Counselor's Manual*, he shifted his focus to the authoritative nature of nouthetic counseling and the view of pastors as "God's professionals" in connection to church discipline. Although informal mutual counseling has always been a vital aspect of the BCM, it has gained a reputation for being confrontational and authoritative because of Adams's later shift in emphasis.

The inaccurate representation of the BCM as solely using an authoritative and directive approach to counseling needed to be addressed. As a result, Powlison, as the movement's new intellectual leader in 1988, stressed the rarity of authoritative nouthetic counseling and the significance of "peer-counseling" that has always been at the heart of the BCM:

> We need to rethink this. In fact, the authoritative shepherd who decisively intervenes is only one of the modes of biblical counseling. It is not even the primary mode. It is the backup mode for when the primary mode fails. The most characteristic biblical counseling relationship is a long-term friendship, consisting of mutually invited counsel and generating dependency on God as well as constructive interdependency on one another. The authoritative, short-term intervention is the emergency, life-saving measure. Is this a new message within nouthetic counseling? Far from it. There always has been a peculiar (and biblical!) tension within nouthetic counseling between short-term "restorative" counseling and ongoing "preventive" counseling.[145]

[144] I believe Cheong and Jones's essay "Biblical Counseling, the Church, and Church Discipline" is a helpful biblical treatment of church discipline and biblical counseling. Robert Cheong and Robert Jones, "Biblical Counseling, the Church, and Church Discipline," in Kellemen and Carson, *Biblical Counseling and the Church*, 154–69.

[145] Powlison, "Crucial Issues in Contemporary Biblical Counseling," 66.

In the article, Powlison also suggested a helpful model to understand pastoral authority in biblical counseling. He explained that the "nouthetic" aspect of biblical counseling serves as a backup and is used when the sheep wander or run away from the Shepherd's fence. On the other hand, the mutual care aspect of biblical counseling is the primary mode. It encompasses all the elements of the everyday Christian life, such as mutual edification, encouragement, and love. This type of counseling is designed to be as interpersonal, egalitarian, and biblically "non-directive and counselee-centered" as possible.[146] He also suggested that a large portion of biblical counseling should not appear authoritative and that it is preferable for a pastor to reduce the authoritative, formal, confrontational, and unilateral aspects of counseling as much as possible.[147] Powlison used the following diagram to explain the difference between peer counseling and authoritative counseling.

[146] Powlison, "Crucial Issues in Contemporary Biblical Counseling," 67.

[147] Powlison, "Crucial Issues in Contemporary Biblical Counseling," 70.

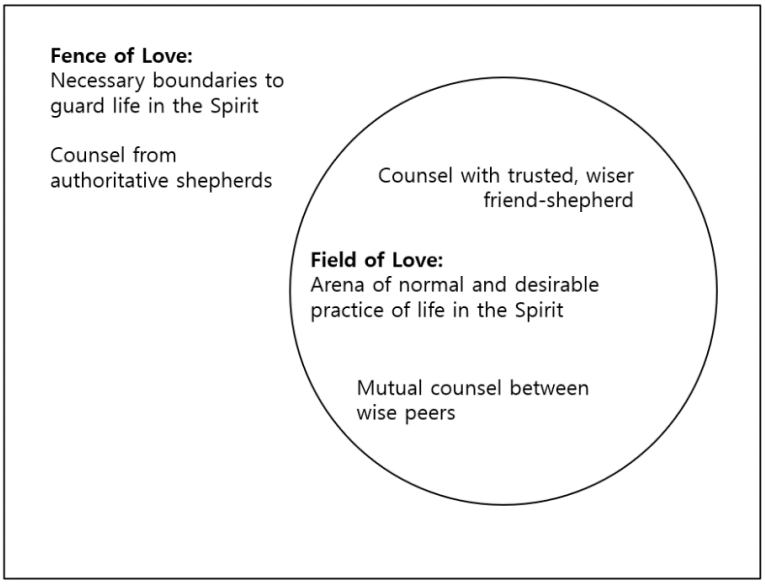

Figure 2. Powlison's diagram demonstrating the differences between peer counseling and authoritative counseling[148]

Pastoral Counseling and Para-Church Ministries

The relationship between pastoral counseling and para-church ministries within the larger context of the "church" is the last factor we must consider in this section. Unfortunately, this area has frequently been overlooked in the BCM. Despite the movement's emphasis on the importance of the church, little research has been published on the role of the para-church ministries and their relationship to pastoral counseling. Powlison notes, "The church does not currently have in place many of the necessary commitment statements, educational resources, training arrangements, oversight mechanisms, and practice venues to deliver the goods."[149] This concern also applies to the para-church's role in pastoral counselor training, providing accountability and

[148] Powlison, "Crucial Issues in Contemporary Biblical Counseling," 68.

[149] David Powlison, "Counseling Is the Church," *JBC* 20, no. 2 (2002): 3.

oversight of pastoral biblical counselors, and guiding referral practice in pastoral counseling.

First, there is a considerable demand for para-church biblical counseling ministries to aid pastoral counselor training along with the seminaries. According to Lambert and Powlison, "A pastor-to-be who desires to learn how to preach has no shortage of opportunities to do so. . . . But no abundance of resources is available for counseling ministry."[150] This is why even Adams, who advocated seminary education over any counseling training program for pastors,[151] founded the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation (CCEF) to equip pastors to become competent counselors. Currently, only a handful of seminaries in the United States offer biblical counseling programs to train pastors. Jeremy Pierre and Lilly Park assert that Christian academia is a vital para-church ministry that allows a space for the "theoretical pursuit of knowledge that is necessary to practical application in ministry," which is often deferred in the frontlines of the ministry fields.[152] Thus, for the BCM to grow in theory and practice, the development of academic institutions and scholars is vitally necessary. Even if the pastor receives biblical counseling training from a seminary, para-church organizations that provide adequate hands-on training and counseling resources are still required to help them keep their counseling knowledge and skills current while serving in their respective ministry fields. In this regard, para-church organizations are vital in providing pastors with the resources and training they require for competent biblical counseling ministry.

Second, accountability is a critical aspect of healthy pastoral counseling in the BCM because without it, pastors engaged in this ministry may not be held responsible for adhering to biblical counseling's core doctrines and ethical guidelines. Unfortunately,

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[150] Heath Lambert and David Powlison, "Biblical Counseling, the Church, and the Para-Church," in Kellemen and Carson, *Biblical Counseling and the Church*, 358.

[151] Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 61.

[152] Jeremy Pierre and Lilly Park, "Biblical Counseling, the Church, and the Academy," in Kellemen and Carson, *Biblical Counseling and the Church*, 370.

many conservative pastors conducting biblical counseling lack ecclesial oversight to enforce any guidelines. While denominations, synods, and congregations may get involved when significant ethical or theological issues arise, these interventions typically occur for errors outside pastoral counseling. For this reason, pastoral counseling issues such as counseling content, methodology, and practice are often overlooked.

If pastoral counseling, which is to help people who are suffering and transform sinners, is part of the church's whole ministry, according to the Bible, it must be done with accountability under the supervision of church leadership. As emphasized by Powlison, "Counseling should express and fall under the authority and orthodoxy of the church."[153] However, how can pastoral counseling be made accountable when the leaders of the churches, denominations, and conventions hold different views on Christian counseling (i.e., integration and Christian psychology)? Ideally, accountability should occur at the local church and denominational level. However, given the fragmented situation, certifying biblical counseling organizations (i.e., ACBC, ABC) and a confessional consortium such as the Biblical Counseling Coalition (BCC) can play a supportive role that offer supervision and accountability. For this reason, Lambert and Powlison assert, "As para-church leaders create a faithful context for accountability in the practice of biblical counseling, local churches will benefit, able to grow in their conscious faithfulness to this important task."[154]

Third, the referral practice in pastoral counseling in relation to para-church ministries, such as independent Christian counselors, should be carefully considered. According to Adams, pastors should avoid referring any counseling cases outside the church except to another, more experienced pastor. However, there may be occasions where referrals are required, such as when the pastor's schedule is too full to take on

[153] Powlison, "Counseling Is the Church," 3.

[154] Lambert and Powlison, "Biblical Counseling, the Church, and the Para-Church," 362.

another case or when the case exceeds their knowledge or experience. In these instances, it is best to refer the member to a more experienced biblical counselor who holds the same beliefs as the pastor and church. However, suppose there are no biblical counseling services in the area, and the only options available are Christian counselors or Christian psychologists. In that case, Welch suggests pastors should view independent Christian counselors as part-time adjunct church staff when referring.[155] As a result, the independent counselor's life and doctrine can be examined more thoroughly, and the church is given control and oversight over them. Similarly, Julie Lowe suggests that biblical counseling pastors should not refer out counselees but instead "refer-in" counselors to the church's ministry.[156]

Conclusion

Along with other introductory matters, in this chapter, I have explained that the BCM's claim that pastors should "biblically counsel and equip biblical counselors" should be understood as the movement's theological vision. This vision stems from a biblical pastoral theology that governs the practice of pastoral ministry. The statement is not a practical directive for pastoral counseling ministry; instead, it represents a "shepherding perspective" that facilitates the application of doctrinal teachings on pastoral care and counseling within contemporary local churches. By adopting this theological vision, pastors and biblical counselors gain a theological perspective that allows them to develop practical guidelines tailored to their specific pastoral contexts.

The chapter also outlined the claim from three theological angles: anthropological, epistemological, and ecclesiological perspectives. From an anthropological standpoint, biblical counseling maintains a dualistic perspective on

[155] Edward T. Welch, "When Independent Counselors Do Pastoral Care," *JBC* 25, no. 2 (2007): 58.

[156] Julie Lowe, "For Pastors: A New Perspective on Referring Out," *Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation* (blog), August 11, 2021, https://www.ccef.org/for-pastors-a-new-perspective-on-referring-out/.

human nature, highlighting the significance of the spirit and body while dismissing the notion of an independent entity for the psyche or soul. According to this perspective, the goal of counseling is to help individuals experience salvation and progressive sanctification found in Christ. In that sense, pastors are soul care experts since they specialize in spiritual matters and are appointed by the church to teach and guide the spiritual needs of those under their care. They are equipped to apply biblical truth to life's issues and are called to train lay counselors to do the same.

The epistemological viewpoint posits that Scripture, as God's inspired Word, encompasses divine power and redemptive guidance for fallen humanity. The BCM stresses the sufficiency of Scripture in counseling and the vital function of pastors in guiding God's people through the Word. Pastors are considered gifted and appointed individuals, called to instruct and shepherd God's congregation. Simultaneously, the BCM acknowledges the significance of pastors equipping lay Christians to examine and counsel one another.

Lastly, the ecclesiological perspective of the BCM addresses the role of pastors as biblical counselors and their responsibility to equip God's people for the ministry of biblical counseling. The BCM asserts that the church offers an institutional structure for nurturing believers' souls, with pastors acknowledged as authorized biblical counselors within this biblical establishment. Pastoral counseling is considered an expansion of other pastoral care ministries, requiring pastors to strike a balance between counseling and other duties. Although counseling is crucial, pastors cannot have daily counseling sessions with every member, so they must prepare each member to contribute to the church's soul-care ministry. Pastors are responsible for creating both formal and informal biblical counseling ministries and fostering a discipleship culture within their churches.

Having established an in-depth understanding of the BCM's claim, I proceed to examine the biblical theology of the shepherding metaphor (chapter 2) before

evaluating the claim in two parts: “The pastors as biblical counselors” (chapter 3) and “The pastors as equippers of biblical counselors” (chapter 4).

CHAPTER 2

DEFINING THE SHEPHERD METAPHOR

What is the biblical basis behind using a biblical theology of the shepherding metaphor as a standard to evaluate and determine the biblical legitimacy of the biblical counseling movement's claim that pastors should function as biblical counselors and equip Christians under their care to do the same? Is a biblical theology of the shepherding metaphor the only valid theological approach for this task? For instance, a pastoral theologian, Andrew Purves, objected to utilizing the shepherd metaphor to determine pastoral identity and ministry. He claims, "Shepherding is a good theological metaphor for ministry as far as it goes, but it ill serves the church today when employed as the dominant or controlling metaphor for pastoral ministry."[1] Purves believes that the shepherd metaphor is outdated for contemporary pastoral theology because modern societies have moved away from an agrarian way of life, rendering the metaphor ineffective and possibly confusing to modern audiences, causing them to miss its theological meaning. Specifically, Purves puts forward four reasons why he objects to using the shepherd metaphor in modern pastoral theology: (1) the metaphor has an inherent cultural gap; (2) it is theologically inadequate to explain the entirety of pastoral ministry; (3) it has been misused by the modern pastoral care movement and diverged from its appropriate theological context; and (4) the metaphor is limited in that it is only imitative and not participatory.[2]

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[1] Andrew Purves, "Introduction: Building a New Foundation," in *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology: A Christological Foundation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), xxx. This view was also suggested by Adolf von Harnack, Rudolf Bultmann, Carole Wise, and others, according to Thomas Oden. Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 51.

[2] Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, 28–34.

The objections raised by Purves are legitimate points to consider when developing pastoral theology. Therefore, in line with Purves's concerns, Daniel L. Akin and R. Scott Pace grounded their pastoral theology on various Christian doctrines, particularly the Trinity.[3] As Purves, Akin, and Pace argue, it is significant that pastoral theologians prioritize developing pastoral theology founded on sound biblical doctrines to comprehend pastoral identity and ministry because the availability of various doctrines to shape pastoral identity and practice can lead to a comprehensive understanding from different theological perspectives.

In contrast, Timothy Laniak, Thomas Oden, Derek Tidball, Jay Adams, and Timothy Witmer argue that not only is the biblical shepherd metaphor still applicable to understanding pastoral identity and ministry in the twenty-first century, but it is also theologically necessary because it is intrinsically linked to the concept of the pastoral office explained in the Scriptures.[4] Adams claims,

> The name "pastoral" is a uniquely Christian term that expresses a fundamental concept that is deeply embedded in every biblical portrayal of Christian ministry. The term refers to a rich scriptural figure that finds its beginning and end in God. He, who is the "Shepherd of Israel" (Psalm 80:1), ultimately demonstrated the meaning of His covenantal love as the Great Shepherd of the sheep by giving His life for them (John 10:11). The figure virtually bursts with significance, far more than didactic statements ever could express.[5]

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[3] "The orthodox conviction of a triune God existing in three persons is foundational to any evangelical theological enterprise. Scripture maintains the unified nature of God's being as one (Deut 6:4) while also affirming the equally divine essence and distinct personhood of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19). . . . This ontological and economic understanding of the Trinity serves as a basis for pastoral ministry by demonstrating, through God's fundamental nature, how function derives from essence." Daniel L. Akin and R. Scott Pace, *Pastoral Theology: Theological Foundations for Who a Pastor Is and What He Does* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2017), 12.

[4] Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible*, NSBT 20 (Leicester, England: Apollos, 2006); Oden, *Pastoral Theology*; Derek J. Tidball, "Pastoral Theology," in *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. David F. Wright and Sinclair Ferguson, and J. I. Packer (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988); Jay Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock: A Handbook on Pastoral Ministry, Counseling, and Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979); Timothy Z. Witmer, *The Shepherd Leader: Achieving Effective Shepherding in Your Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2010).

[5] Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock*, chap. 2.

In other words, the shepherd imagery in the Bible functions as more than an allegory or metaphor for the pastoral office. It provides a complex redemptive-historical story of God as the shepherd of his people and functions as a model and a call to participation for pastors. For this reason, I believe that the shepherd metaphor is the most suitable theological approach for assessing the BCM's assertion.

However, it is critical to distinguish between employing a redemptive-historical approach to the shepherd metaphor for understanding poimenics (pastoral theology) and employing it as an analogy. For example, Thomas Oden and Seward Hiltner advocate for the usefulness of the shepherd metaphor as an analogy for pastoral theology.[6] Utilizing the shepherd metaphor as an analogy can be of some value in understanding pastoral identity and ministry because metaphor is a cognitive tool that allows us to understand one domain of experience in terms of another.[7] The analogy method can provide a conceptual and illustrative comprehension of pastoral ministry that surpasses technical definition. However, the Bible does not present shepherding metaphors in textually disconnected analogies for understanding poimenics. Rather, it gives a redemptive-historical understanding of God shepherding his people. It serves as an eschatological lens to comprehend a pastor's calling and role in God's grand story of redemption.[8]

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[6] Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 49–52; Seward Hiltner, *Preface to Pastoral Theology* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1958), 18. More specifically, Hiltner proposes to use the shepherding metaphor as a perspective for understanding pastoral ministry.

[7] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 5. Lakoff and Johnson claim, "The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another."

[8] Refer to G K. (Gregory K) Beale, "Sizemore Lecture II, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, November 3, 2010 The Inaugurated End-Time Tribulation and Its Bearing on the Church Office of Elder and on Christian Living in General: Midwestern Journal of Theology," *Midwestern Journal of Theology* 10, no. 1 (2011): 32–57. In this lecture, G.K. Beale examines the relationship between the eschatological tribulation and the office of elder in the church from a redemptive-historical perspective, focusing on Daniel 7 and 12, as well as Revelation. He believes that the office of elder was created to address the ongoing threat of false teaching and deception in churches. Although Beale does not use the shepherding metaphor, his overall argument is consistent with my findings, which emphasize the importance of pastors' teaching ministries in shepherding Christians to follow the Shepherd "wherever he goes" through both personal and public approaches (Rev 14:4).

Purves argues that the shepherd metaphor may appear limited and irrelevant when examining contextually isolated passages to develop contemporary pastoral theology. However, a biblical-theological examination provides a thorough theological foundation for pastoral identity and ministry. For this reason, evangelical pastoral theologians such as Laniak, Tidball, and Witmer go to great lengths to explain the biblical theology of the shepherding found in the Bible to develop a robust understanding of pastoral ministry.[9] In that sense, shepherding imagery in the Bible is not merely a metaphor for analogy but also a typology. As James Hamilton defines, "Typology is God-ordained, author-intended historical correspondence and escalation in significance between people, events, and institutions across the Bible's redemptive-historical story (i.e., in covenantal context)."[10] As we will see in the next section, the shepherding metaphor fulfills these typological requirements.

Laniak claimed, "Biblically, leadership can only be understood in terms of a fully integrated theological vision of God and his work on earth."[11] In this line of thought, one contends that pastoral praxis should be shaped by the biblical framework, specifically an eschatological view of God's pastoral identity and ministry as the Shepherd, considering the already and not yet aspects of redemptive history. In this respect, the biblical shepherd metaphor provides a hermeneutical lens for envisioning future practices and evaluating past praxis. As a result, a biblical theological interpretation of the shepherding metaphor provides a theologically rich and broad perspective of poimenics from which to assess modern pastoral theology, including the BCM's claim.

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[9] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*; Tidball, "Pastoral Theology"; Witmer, *The Shepherd Leader*.

[10] James M. Hamilton Jr., *Typology: Understanding the Bible's Promise-Shaped Patterns: How Old Testament Expectations Are Fulfilled in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2022), 26.

[11] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 249.

A Word Study Overview

The Old Testament employs the Hebrew term רָעָה (r'h), translated as "shepherd" in English, in various ways in the Old Testament (OT). As a verb, it is associated with shepherding activities such as tending (Gen 30:36; Exod 3:1; 1 Sam 16:11; Jer 6:3; Ezek 34:23), grazing (Gen 36:24; 41:2; Exod 34:3), feeding (Ps 80:13; Isa 11:7; 49:9; Ezek 34:10), and caring (Ps 49:14; Zech 11:9). However, רָעָה is primarily used in noun form to denote a shepherd of physical animals (Gen 29:9; 49:24; Exod 2:17; 1 Sam 5:2; 2 Sam 25:7; Ps 23:1; Isa 13:20; 31:4; Jer 43:12). Specifically, in noun form, רָעָה is directly used ten times to refer to God as the Shepherd of Israel (Gen 48:15; Ps 28:9; Ezek 34:15–16; Hos 4:16; Mic 7:14), eight times for the princes or rulers of Israel in Ezekiel 34, four times for King David (1 Sam 16:11; 2 Sam 5:2; 1 Chr 11:2; Ps 78:72), and three times for the Messianic ruler (Isa 40:11; Ezek 34:23; Mic 5:4). Another Hebrew word, נָקַד, is also used, but its occurrence in the OT is minor (2 Kgs 3:4; Amos 1:1).

The Greek word ποιμήν (shepherd) is used in noun form eighteen times to denote a person responsible for caring for a flock. Out of these instances, ποιμήν is directly used seven times to refer to Christ as the Shepherd of his people (Matt 9:36; Mark 6:34; 14:27; John 10:2, 11, 14, 16; Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 2:5), and once to refer to church leaders (Eph 4:11). Nevertheless, the concept of pastoral leadership is implied through the figurative language of the shepherd in the New Testament (NT) (John 21:15–17; Acts 20:28–29; 1 Pet 5:2).

The term "sheep" is significant in the shepherding metaphor since the shepherd's identity is inseparable from his relationship to the flock he tends. The most common Hebrew word for sheep in the OT is צאֹן, which appears 270 times and encompasses various related meanings such as sheep, flock, goats, animals, lambs, and ewes. Out of these occurrences, it is used twenty-four times to refer to God's people (Ps 74:1; 95:7; 100:3; Jer 23:1, 3; Ezek 34:2, 6) and eight times to refer to the remnants of Israel that God will regather from the Babylonian captivity (Jer 23:3; Ezek 34:5–6, 10).

In the NT, the most common Greek word for sheep is πρόβατον. This word appears forty times, and unlike צאֹן in the OT, it specifically refers to sheep without encompassing other domesticated animals. It is primarily used to denote God's people (Matt 9:36; 10:6; 25:33; Luke 15:4; John 10; 21:16–17). However, it is also used to refer to Christ as the sacrificial lamb (Acts 8:32) and to describe the church suffering as Christ (Rom 8:36). Interestingly, ἀρνίον (lamb) is exclusively used in Revelation twenty-nine times to refer to Christ (Rev 5:6; 6:1; 7:9; 12:11; 14:1; 15:3). Nevertheless, it appears once in John 21:15 to refer to God's people.

Another relevant word in the shepherding metaphor is "flock," which signifies a group of sheep in the Bible. In the OT, the word "flock" appears 187 times, with צאֹן being used 126 times and עֶדֶר appearing twenty-five times to refer to the English word "flock." While the metaphorical expression of God's flock is conveyed through צאֹן and עֶדֶר, direct references occur seventeen times (Ps 74:1; 95:7; 100:3; Jer 23; Ezek 34). In the NT, the word "flock" is expressed through ποίμνιον and ποίμνη, which appear nine times. Out of these occurrences, both words primarily refer to God's people, specifically the church (John 10:16; Acts 20:28–29; 1 Pet 5:3).

A Biblical Theology of the Shepherding Metaphor

A biblical-theological analysis of the shepherding metaphor in the Bible posits that pastoral imagery is an essential part of God's redemption of his people.[12] The story commences with the first Passover in Egypt when God the Shepherd leads his people into the Promised Land via Moses, his human shepherd. The shepherd motif continues through David, who represents a shepherd-king; however, it reaches its downfall with the judgment against evil shepherds of Israel and the scattering of God's flock into foreign

[12] Laniak provides a thorough biblical-theological analysis of the shepherd metaphor in *Shepherds after My Own Heart*. While I have formed my own understanding of the topic, his work has been valuable in aiding me to develop comprehensive perspectives on the subject.

nations. During the Israelites' exile in Babylon, the theme recurs with the promise that the messianic Shepherd will come in the end times to deliver God's sheep. Thus, the climax of the biblical redemptive story is the coming and death of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, who sacrifices himself as the Lamb of God to save his sheep. Nevertheless, the messianic Shepherd rises from the dead and gathers his sheep to lead them through the end times until God's perfect dwelling is consummated with them (Rev 7:15, 17). Today, Christ, although he does not cease being the Chief Shepherd by adding human undershepherds, appoints and empowers human shepherds (elders/pastors) to accomplish this eschatological shepherding mission, as they are called to imitate the Chief Shepherd by exercising his care and authority over his sheep and by following him to death.

The following section will detail the shepherding metaphor found in Scripture. However, since the objective is to introduce a biblical theology of the shepherding metaphor as an assessment instrument and not a full-fledged biblical survey, I will illustrate how this metaphor consists of three essential components: the relationship between God and his people, the individuals designated as undershepherds by God, and the Divine telos.[13]

God's Relationship with His People

From a very early date, God's people understood YWHH, their covenant Lord, as their Shepherd. This is evident in both a personal and collective sense in the life of ancient Israel. The first reference for this in the Bible is Jacob's testimony at the end of his life as he blesses Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh. There, he calls the Lord "the God who has been my shepherd" (Gen 48:15). This statement is not a religious aphorism of the time but Jacob's confession of faith, which came from his own experience as a

[13] David Davidson deserves credit for organizing the biblical theology of the shepherding metaphor in this manner. Nevertheless, I describe the three components of the metaphor in different ways. Davidson, in particular, appears to disregard the metaphor's eschatological component. As a result, I have expanded the theological structure using Richard Gaffin's concept of inaugurated eschatology in the "telos" section. David Allen Davidson, "An Examination of the Shepherding Metaphor in Pastoral Theology" (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022).

shepherd. As a shepherd, Jacob had personally experienced God caring for him and his family as a faithful Shepherd. Thus, he confessed God as his Shepherd.[14]

The tradition of acknowledging and confessing God as the Shepherd of God's people is reflected well in Psalm 23. David testifies, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Ps 23:1). Here, David perceives God primarily as the Shepherd who provides and protects him. However, his confession is not limited to his personal experience. Although the metaphor holds an aspect of personal confession and the conceptualization of God as the personal Shepherd, the metaphor comes from the collective experience of Israel. According to Peter Craigie and Tate Marvin, who note the communal conceptualization of the shepherding metaphor,

> It [the shepherd metaphor in Psalm 23] is not merely a picture drawn randomly from nature to illustrate the character of the relationship between God and the psalmist. It is a metaphor drawing on the ancient resources of the Hebrew tradition; thus, the psalmist is linking his thought to a broader concept, namely that of God, who had been experienced as a shepherd by many persons over many generations.[15]

The corporate understanding of God as the Shepherd is found in multiple places in the Psalms (e.g., Pss 28:9; 77:20; 80:1–2; 95:7). Furthermore, since Psalms also functioned as the national hymnal of Israel, one can argue that these psalms are not merely individual testimonies of inspired persons but a collective confession of God's people acknowledging YHWH as the Shepherd of Israel.[16]

How did a collective conceptualization of Shepherd form in Israel's mind? Laniak argues that the communal recognition of God as Israel's shepherd was formed

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[14] Although the direct reference to God as the Shepherd is rare (Gen 49:24; Ps 23:1; 80:1; Ezek 34), the evidence that the Hebrews saw God as their shepherd is to be found all throughout the Bible, as it will be presented in the following sections.

[15] Peter C. Craigie and Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 1–50*, 2nd ed., WBC 19 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 2004), 205.

[16] This argument is in line with Tremper Longman, who also notes that "the primary use of the book of Psalms . . . during the Old Testament period was in the public corporate worship of Israel." Tremper Longman III, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries 15–16 (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 36–37. It is also in line with other theological scholars such as Artur Weiser and Hans-Joachim Kraus, who primarily perceive Psalms as a liturgical book of the OT community according to Longman.

through the wilderness sojourn.[17] The evidence for this can be found in the inspired writers' allusion to the shepherd metaphor in their recollection of God's works in the wilderness (Exod 13:18; Deut 29:5; Ps 78:52; Ezek 20:10). In that sense, Deuteronomy especially plays a vital role in forming a collective conceptualization of God as the shepherd of Israel.

Laniak argues that Moses's interpretation of this formational period in Israel's history in Deuteronomy lays out a "covenantal hermeneutic for interpreting the history that follows."[18] For example, in Deuteronomy 8:2–3, Moses interprets God's presence in the wilderness journey revealed through the faithful leading and protection over Israel as their Shepherd. Although the word "shepherd" is not mentioned, readers can notice that he is alluding to the shepherding metaphor:

> And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has *led* you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. And he humbled you and let you hunger and *fed* you with manna, which you did not know. (Deut 8:2–3)

God shepherded Israel through the Sinai wilderness as their Shepherd. He physically manifested his presence and led them with the glory cloud and pillar of fire. He protected them from the enemies and oppressions (Exod 3:7–8; Deut 23:14), and he provided for their every need in the desert in abundance (Ps 78:19; 105:40–41). As a result, the succeeding generation is instructed to recall how the Lord guided them as a shepherd to lead their forefathers out of the wilderness and into the Promised Land (Deut 32:10–12; Ps 78:53–54; 105:40–41). This recollection should provide them with a theological perspective to interpret their identity as God's people and faith to believe that the Lord will guide them through all the hardships they may face in life.

[17] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 78.

[18] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 79.

Rooted in the Shepherd-sheep relationship, the biblical imagery stresses the Divine Shepherd's care and compassion and the people's dependence on God to meet all their needs (Ps 23:1).[19] Specifically, according to Laniak, his pastoral provision is primarily seen in four ways in the exodus narrative, which serves as a prototype for the following narratives in the redemptive history: presence, protection, provision, and guidance.[20] First, God led his people through his presence. His dwelling among them was physically manifested through the glory cloud (כָּבוֹד), the Ark of Covenant, and the Tabernacle. God's presence brought comfort to his people and gave them a sense of national identity as the Lord's possession before other nations (Exod 33:15–16).[21] Second, God led his people through the wilderness under his protection (Deut 23:14). The divine protection is especially evident in the exodus narrative (Exod 14). An intriguing theological concept concerning God's protection in the Bible is that the Lord is portrayed not only as the Shepherd of Israel but also as the Divine Warrior who fights for his people with his mighty hands (Exod 3:19; 6:1; 13:9; 32:11; Deut. 5:15; 6:21; 7:8). Third, God pastored his people through his provision. Laniak observes that "of the four wilderness episodes leading up to the Sinai revelation in Exodus, one reveals God as able protector (vs. Amalek) and three reveal him as gracious provider (of water, bread, and meat)."[22] God's provision for his people also includes physical healing (Num 21:8–9), rest (Exod 33:14; Isa 63:14), and spiritual sustenance through the Law (Deut 8:3; 32:2; Ezek 20:11; 13). One can argue that the Promised Land also expressed God's ultimate

[19] Leland Ryken, Jim Wilhoit, and Tremper III Longman, eds., "Sheep, Shepherd," in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 785.

[20] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 77–87. Witmer and others have their own views concerning God's ministry to the flock. For instance, Witmer categorizes them as know, feed, lead, and protect.

[21] Paul Sevier Minear and Leander Keck assert that God's people are formed only through God's gracious and faithful action in "creating, calling, sustaining, judging, and saving it. They are a people only because he dwells within them and moves among them." Paul Sevier Minear and Leander E. Keck, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Louisville: Presbyterian, 2004), 69. This is also true for the NT community. It is through Christ, the Great Shepherd, the church can be called his people (1 Pet 2:9–10).

[22] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 81.

provision for the Israelites in the wilderness.[23] Last, the Lord led his people through his divine guidance, which is expressed through different verbs such as נָחָה guiding (Exod 15:13), נָהַג driving or herding (Exod 3:1; Ps 78:52), and נָחָה personal guidance (Exod 13:21; Neh 9:12; Ps 78:14).[24] Although God provided abundantly for his flock, the Shepherd-sheep relationship was often marked by stubbornness and rebellion. The Israelites' frequent unbelief and rebellious attitude toward God began at the Red Sea (Exod 14:11–12). This culminated at Kadesh Barnea (Num 13–14), where God's judgment excluded those over twenty (except Joshua and Caleb) from entering the Land of Promise. For this reason, God warns the later generation "that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God" (Ps 78:8). Nevertheless, this evil tendency continues throughout the Old Testament to a point where God banishes them from the Promise Land to foreign nations as exiles (Hos 4:16).[25] Although God promises to deliver them through his mighty hands, it is worth noting the stubborn and rebellious tendency of the flock.

In summary, shepherd imagery is primarily associated with the Divine Shepherd and his relationship with his flock. Paul Minear and Leander Keck claim, "The picture of the flock belongs inseparably to the picture of the shepherd (*poimēn*). The

[23] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 84. "While the land is, in one sense, outside the Torah, it is the focus of much of its attention and the goal of the narrative."

[24] נָחָה [*nhl*] often refers to "gentle leading." Laniak explains that this verbal root was used in Genesis 33:14 for Jacob's slower pace for his flocks and poetically in Psalm 23:2 to express God leading his sheep to quiet waters. נָהַג [*nig*] refers to leading by a group of animals (or people) to a specific destination. נָחָה [*nhh*] emphasized God's personal guidance, often expressed through desert pillars to a specific destination. Although God led his people through physical manifestations during the wilderness period, he also guided them to the "path of righteousness" (Ps 23:3) by giving them the Law. In other words, the Divine Shepherd's guidance extended beyond geographical guidance. This concept further develops through Christ, who guides and instructs the church to grow into his likeness (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18; Eph 4:13, 1 John 3:2).

[25] Walter Brueggemann notes that "the most important usages of the image of Yahweh as Shepherd appear in the exile. The exile is said to be a time when the flock was 'scattered'; that term is used regularly to refer to the exile. The work of the shepherd Yahweh is to gather the sheep in safety, often when they are exposed to serious danger." Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 260.

master image, rightly seen, is that of shepherd-and-flock. Never does either shepherd or flock appear without implying the other."[26] This imagery is relevant to an individual's relationship with their own Shepherd, but more significantly, it can be broadly applied to include all of God's people. For the present research, it is important to consider both individualistic and corporate aspects of biblical shepherding. Lastly, while not exhaustive, we have examined that God's care for his people as a shepherd can be characterized by four primary functions: presence, protection, provision, and guidance. Although these functions can be articulated using various categorizations or terminology, they sum up God's shepherding ministry for his people.

God's Undershepherds

The second constitutive element of the shepherding metaphor is God's extension of his shepherd leadership through human agents. The God of the Bible actively seeks human participation in his work, regularly placing it in their hands. Thus, the Bible consistently emphasizes the importance of human agency as part of God's plan, beginning with the command in Genesis for humans to multiply and rule over creation as God's representatives (Gen 1:28) and culminating in Revelation 20:4–6, where believers are depicted as reigning with Christ. For this reason, Laniak concludes, "Our theology of leadership is informed by this breathtaking choice of God to grant royal prerogatives to his creatures. To be made his image is to rule with him and for him. Reigning with him is the destiny of all those who follow the Lamb in Revelation."[27]

[26] Minear and Keck, *Images of the Church in the New Testament*, 19.

[27] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 248.

The Prototypical Old Testament Undershepherds

In the Old Testament, God showed his care and guidance for his people through human leaders who acted as his representatives.[28] These leaders led the people of Israel from various leadership positions in ancient Hebrew society and were given authority to lead God's people. Until the arrival of Christ, the ultimate Shepherd, these human leaders served as prototypes for future leaders to follow. Moses and David, in particular, were the ideal undershepherds.

Moses is the is the first major Old Testament example of God's undershepherd, as he was instrumental in leading the Hebrews out of Egypt, forming them into a nation to serve God, and bringing them close to the land promised to their forefathers. For this reason, in the Old Testament, along with the psalmist from Psalm 77, Isaiah identifies Moses as a shepherd of Israel: "Then his people recalled the days of old, the days of Moses and his people—where is he who brought them through the sea, with the shepherd of his flock? Where is he who set his Holy Spirit among them" (Isa 63:11 NIV). Though the grammatical structure of the original text is somewhat ambiguous, Edward Joseph Young concludes that the "shepherd" is Moses: "On the one view, it is God who delivered the people and with them the shepherd of His flock; on the other, it is Moses who as the shepherd brought the people up from the Red Sea."[29] In other words, Young suggests that Scripture perceives Moses and Aaron as shepherds due to their instrumental role in God's plan for guiding his people into the Promised Land. In that sense, Trent Butler claims that "All leadership in Israel occurs in the shadow of Moses. He has died, but his example and teaching stand before every successor."[30]

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[28] Although there are different views concerning who were the pastors (shepherds) of Israel, following John McNeil, who wrote *A History of the Cure of Souls*, Tidball summarizes them into king, priests, prophets, wise men, and parents. See Derek Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds: An Introduction to Pastoral Theology* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1986), 41–45; John T. McNeil, *A History of the Cure of Souls* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1951).

[29] Edward Joseph Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 3:484.

[30] Trent C. Butler, *Joshua 1–12*, 2nd ed., WBC 7a (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 13.

David is another shepherd-leader model who paved the way for future shepherds of Israel to follow. In recounting the glory of David's reign, the psalmist writes, "David shepherded them with the integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them" (Ps 78:72 NIV). Although many failures marked his life, as detailed in 1 and 2 Samuel, the book concludes with a summary of his reign as one generally marked by faithfulness to YHWH. He is a military leader who establishes peace and a wise, righteous, and just judge who defends the oppressed. In pastoral terms, he serves God's people as a protector, provider, and guide.[31] He accomplishes as a divinely appointed shepherd leader because he remains committed and faithful to YHWH. From both Moses and David, it is clear that the faithfulness of human shepherds to the Divine Shepherd as vicegerents is crucial to their success as leaders. Most importantly, it should be highlighted that "the Davidic king is simply viewed as God's son, his designated representative on earth" (1 Chr 14:17; 17:13; 22:9–10; 28:6; 32:23; see also 2 Sam 7:14).[32] In other words, David is a prototype of the Great Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

Failures of Human Shepherds

Although Moses and David are prototypes of the Old Testament undershepherds, the Bible is candid about their shortcomings, emphasizing the need for the Messiah (the Good Shepherd). For example, Moses's disobedience to God at Kadesh, where he struck a rock out of anger to provide water for the Israelites, revealed his ultimate inadequacy as a shepherd, resulting in his disqualification from entering the promised land (Num 20:1–13). Similarly, David's flaws as a shepherd-king were exposed in his affair with Bathsheba and his eventual murder of her husband Uriah (2 Sam 11). As a result, David's infant son died. The prophet Nathan prophesied that "the sword shall

[31] For this reason, 1 and 2 Kings often compare the kings of Israel and Judah to David (1Kgs 3:3; 15:11; 2 Kgs 14:3; 18:3; 22:2).

[32] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 107.

never depart from [his] house" (2 Sam 12:10). It is important to note that "though the Lord called men to shepherd his flock, it became more apparent with every succeeding generation that the people needed to look to the Lord as their Shepherd king and that the undershepherds themselves needed to be vigilant in following in the Lord."[33]

The frailty of human shepherds remained a significant issue throughout Israel's history. Ezekiel 34 describes in great detail the failings of human undershepherds.[34] This chapter is worth examining because it reveals how inept human undershepherds were in fulfilling God's mandate to care for his sheep. The chapter also explains God's connection with the undershepherd and his sheep as well as the final promise of the Good Shepherd.

In Ezekiel 34, the prophet uses the shepherd metaphor to explain the sins of Israel's leaders during the pre-exilic period and ultimately presents God as the true Shepherd of Israel. More specifically, in this passage, the shepherds of Israel (Ezek 34:2) refer to Israel's kings and rulers (princes), as it was an ancient custom to refer to the kings and princes through the metaphor. Also, Robert Jenson claims, "And the unqualified plural 'the shepherds' suggests that no particular king or pair of kings is intended, but rather Israelite monarchy as a historical phenomenon."[35] According to Cooper, "These 'shepherds' were more than military-political leaders. They bore primary responsibility for the moral and spiritual direction of the nation."[36] As the nation's spiritual leaders, God appointed them to lead his flock with great care. They were accountable to God and responsible to his flock. Their responsibilities as the shepherds of

[33] Witmer, *The Shepherd Leader*, 20.

[34] Related passages concerning the failures of human undershepherds are also found in Jeremiah 23:1–4, Micah 3:1–4, and Zechariah 11:4–17. However, Ezekiel 34 is the most detailed and extensive rebuke against Israel's leaders.

[35] Robert W. Jenson, *Ezekiel*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2009), 473.

[36] LaMar Eugene Cooper Sr., *Ezekiel*, NAC 17 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 298.

God's flock were to gather, feed, heal, and guide (Ezek 34:4). Nevertheless, the prophet prophesied against them, for they used and abused the flock for their selfish gains (Ezek 34:2–3).

John B. Taylor categorizes the sins of Israel's shepherds from Ezekiel 34 into three categories. Firstly, they exploited and took advantage of the people under their care, profiting at their expense. Secondly, they were rebuked for not displaying the pastoral qualities needed to care for the vulnerable members of their community. Lastly, they were blamed for failing to keep their flock safe and scattering them across the earth, as described in Ezekiel's use of the word "scattered" three times in verses 5 and 6.[37] The prophet Ezekiel proclaims that the Israelites were scattered and exiled to foreign lands due to their rulers' failure to fulfill their duty as God's shepherds, as stated in Ezekiel 34:5–6. For this reason, twice in Ezekiel 34, God proclaims his divine opposition towards the leaders and declares that he will hold them accountable for neglecting to tend to his sheep, thereby ending their role as shepherds (Ezek 34:2, 10).

The prophet Ezekiel not only explains the problematic dynamic between God and his undershepherds, but also clearly describes God's relationship with his flock. It is noteworthy that God addresses the flock as his possession multiple times. In Ezekiel 34, God refers to the sheep as "my sheep" twelve times (vv. 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 15, 19, 21) and "my flock" two times (vv. 17, 22). The repetition explicitly demonstrates that the sheep do not belong to the human undershepherds. However, God is the Shepherd of Israel (Ps 80:1). Nevertheless, due to the selfish and irresponsible actions of the human leaders, God's flock experiences terrible consequences. Verses 5 and 6 portray the severe consequences of the reckless actions of the human shepherds, which are deemed even worse than having no leadership at all. With no one to guide the flock, the vulnerable sheep wander aimlessly through the mountains and hills, exposed to attacks from wild

[37] John B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 214.

animals.[38] For this reason, the Lord laments, "My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them" (Ezek 34:6b). These words indicate God's intention to rescue and restore his lost sheep from various nations through the Messiah (Ezek 34:11–12, 28).

Ezekiel does not, however, portray the flock as innocent. Instead, he exposes the sins of the Israelites through the shepherding metaphor. God's pronouncement of judgment over the flock begins in verse 17: "As for you, my flock thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and male goats." This verse shows that good and wicked sheep were mixed inside God's flock, so they were not all innocent. Kenneth E. Bailey summarizes the sins of the flock in these words: "The abused sheep are not necessarily righteous. Some are judged as evil because of their brutality toward other sheep. Like the enemies of the flock, these aggressive sheep scatter the weak sheep."[39] The wicked sheep trampled God's pasture and polluted the water, causing God's flock to consume polluted grass and drink polluted water (Ezek 34:18–19). Leslie Allen also noticed, "It is striking that the phrase 'my sheep' is reserved for the victims . . . the fat and sleek who shoved the weak away were themselves outsiders in Yahweh's eyes."[40] God does not consider everyone in the sheepfold to be "my sheep," but those who were abused and scattered.

Amidst God's criticism against Israel's unfaithful shepherds and corrupt sheep, God provides a hopeful outlook by promising them that he, as the Shepherd, will rescue, bring back, gather, feed, and give rest to his flock (Ezek 34:11–16). He also promises them by foretelling the arrival of a new shepherd who will care for the flock by pointing to the archetype of David. He states, "And I will set up over them one shepherd,

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[38] Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 145.

[39] Kenneth E. Bailey, *The Good Shepherd: A Thousand-Year Journey from Psalm 23 to the New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 95.

[40] Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, WBC 29 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 163.

my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the Lord; I have spoken" (Ezek 34:23–24). The promise is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ, as God's desire for human agency is realized through God the Son assuming human form. Jesus, as the Good Shepherd (ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ καλός) in John 10:11 and a descendant of David, represents the fulfillment of God's promise in Ezekiel 34.

Christ, the Good Shepherd (John 10:1–18)

John 10:1–18 is notoriously tricky in structure and detail because it contains parable, poetic, and allegorical elements.[41] Nevertheless, "it is clear that Jesus brings to a climax the wealth of imagery in the Old Testament regarding the shepherd and especially what is found in Ezekiel 34 and Isaiah 53."[42] Jesus discloses that he is the awaited Davidic Shepherd, known as the Good Shepherd, who was promised to gather and attend to God's flock. In other words, Jesus is the eschatological Shepherd whom God sent to deliver his sheep out of sin and into his kingdom. Jesus elaborates on fulfilling the OT prophecies through figurative language and imparts new theological insights and perspectives to the theme.

The Good Shepherd and Bad Shepherds

Jesus figuratively introduces his identity as "the Good Shepherd." This title metaphorically stands against the wicked shepherds who exploited and forsaken God's sheep in Ezekiel 34 and Jeremiah 23. These wicked human leaders are expressed as robbers, thieves, strangers, hired hands, and wolves in John 10 (vv. 1, 5, 8, 10, 12). These

[41] Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 499.

[42] Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds*, 85. I would also argue that it also contains Psalm 23, Jeremiah 23, and Zechariah 10:2–12 messages as well.

negative metaphorical characters are difficult to identify in the historical context of Jesus's time. According to Bailey, Ibn al-Tayyib and Chrysostom claimed that these were "who came before him [Jesus] claiming to be the Messiah such as Judas the Galilean and Theudas [Acts 5:36–37] and others whose voices were not heeded by the sheep."[43] In contrast, D. A. Carson notes that it is uncertain that these adversative metaphorical characters refer to certain religious leaders. However, they may be primarily "a foil to emphasize characteristics about the Good Shepherd."[44] Nonetheless, the Good Shepherd's death was a result of both the hired hand's abandonment and the wolf's attack. The hired hand fled while the wolf killed the Shepherd.

In contrast to these malevolent shepherds who prioritized their interests over the well-being of the sheep, Jesus shares a personal and close bond with his flock. He knows them individually and leads them by name, as stated in John 10:3b. That the Good Shepherd knows his sheep by name indicates his close relationship with them and his love for them. Unlike the hired hands who do not care for the sheep, he lovingly gathers and leads them to a life of abundance (John 10:4, 9).

The Good Shepherd and Salvation

The most significant aspect of the Good Shepherd is that he sacrificed his life to "save" God's flock. According to Laniak, this notion of salvation in the Gospel of John extends beyond physical protection and encompasses eternal life.[45] The Good Shepherd's mission was to ensure that none of his sheep would perish eternally. Thus, he represents the eschatological realization of the Shepherd promised during the exodus.: "Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that

[43] Bailey, *The Good Shepherd*, 222.

[44] D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 387.

[45] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 214.

the congregation of the Lord may not be as sheep that have no shepherd" (Num 27:16–17).

The salvific intention of the Good Shepherd is indicated in John 10:10: "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." In the same line of thinking, Jesus figuratively declares that he is the gate of the sheep: "I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture" (John 10:9). Historically in the ancient Near Eastern region, the gate is the only opening in the sheepfold's high stone fence or wall. The gate serves as the entrance for the sheep to enter the safety of the enclosure at night, and the watchman (shepherd) lies across it to act as both a gate and a protector. In that sense, the gate symbolizes the only way to enter the security of the sheepfold, highlighting the idea that Jesus is the gate for his flock, the only way to salvation and eternal life.[46] Thus, Jesus figuratively explains that the sheep can experience the eternal life of freedom and security through him.

It is worth noting that Jesus's declaration of salvation in John 10 highlights the individual aspect more than the collective. Mark Katharine Deeley asserts that Jesus's approach aligns with Ezekiel's reasoning: that only those who obey the message of God's messengers can truly inherit God's covenant promises.[47] As we have seen from Ezekiel 34, God's flock in the Old Testament era consisted of both good and bad sheep. God pledged to judge between the two and rescue his sheep from the wicked ones (Ezek 34:11–12, 16–17). Jesus accomplishes this pledge by calling his sheep individually, using their names, and saving those who respond to his voice (John 10:4, 5, 8). Therefore, Jesus

[46] Robert H. Mounce, *John 1–11*, NAC 25 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1991), 331.

[47] Mary Katharine Deeley, "Ezekiel's Shepherd and John's Jesus: A Case Study in the Appropriation of Biblical Texts: Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel: Investigations and Proposals," in *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel: Investigations and Proposals*, ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, JSNTSup 148 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 252–64.

embodies the fulfillment of God's promise to personally shepherd his people and his promise to appoint a Davidic shepherd king, as depicted in John's Gospel.[48]

Jesus's salvific message also entails the promise of bringing in "other sheep that are not of his fold" by calling them so that there will be "one flock" and "one shepherd" (John 10:16). As Carson observes, John 10 suggests that Jesus's salvation is not exclusive to the Jewish people, but rather it is also open to Gentiles.[49] While salvation originates from the Jews (John 4:22), Jesus's call extends to all people, regardless of ethnicity. The death of Jesus was not only for the Jewish nation but also for the scattered children of God, which includes Gentiles, to unify them into one (John 11:51–52, Isa 56:6).[50] Hence, Jesus is not solely the Good Shepherd for the Jewish people but also the Gentiles. Bailey explains this unity through theological observation and claims, "Because the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep, we, the believing community, are drawn into the heart of the good shepherd who dwells within the very heart of God."[51]

The Sacrifice of the Good Shepherd

The redemption of God's flock comes at a price, and the Good Shepherd willingly pays that cost by sacrificing his own life (John 10:17–18). As Tidball argues, "The good shepherd is not only prepared to face danger in defending his sheep (v. 12) but pays the ultimate price of his own life on their account."[52] Although many shepherds in the ancient Near East were willing to take risks to protect their sheep, they did not intentionally sacrifice their lives for them. Hence, Christ's shepherding style is incredibly distinctive, characterized by his readiness to lay down his life for his flock.

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[48] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 252.

[49] Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 388.

[50] Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 231.

[51] Bailey, *The Good Shepherd*, 231.

[52] Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds*, 87.

In that sense, in examining Christ's selfless sacrifice for his flock, Gunter highlights that "in the Good Shepherd discourse, Jesus demonstrates that genuine shepherd leadership is indicated primarily by a singular concern for the sheep entrusted to the leader's care."[53] In other words, a shepherd's ability to provide good care for their flock is based not only on their skills and functions but also on their sincere love and concern for the sheep's well-being. In this line of thinking, Susan Hylen explains the double meaning behind "lays down his life" (John 10:15).[54] According to him, the phrase elucidates not only Jesus's death and resurrection as a one-time event but also his identity and character as the Shepherd. Interpreting "I lay down my life" as Christ's sacrificial and risk-taking nature requires the reader to see greater continuity between Jesus's life and death. Through this metaphor, John presents Jesus's death as an outcome of the kind of life he lived, risking himself on behalf of others. John creates a unique picture of Jesus putting down his life and taking it up again.[55]

Jesus willingly and continuously risks his life as a Shepherd because of his love for his flock. Hylen argues that the Gospel of John frequently portrays Jesus risking his life for his followers. This does not imply that Jesus is persistently sacrificing his life today, as per the Roman Catholic perspective. Instead, putting his life on the line for his sheep characterizes Jesus's divine personality. Although it is not the only viewpoint on Jesus's death, it is one of many valuable perspectives that John offers to help us comprehend who Jesus is as the Good Shepherd and how his undershepherds and followers should imitate him.

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[53] Nathan H. Gunter, "For the Flock: Impetus for Shepherd Leadership in John 10," *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 9.

[54] Susan Hylen, "The Shepherd's Risk: Thinking Metaphorically with John's Gospel," *Biblical Interpretation* 24, no. 3 (2016): 383.

[55] Susan Hylen, "The Shepherd's Risk: Thinking Metaphorically with John's Gospel," 394.

Therefore, the term "the Good Shepherd" does not necessarily indicate the moral righteousness of the Shepherd. Laniak asserts, "*Kalos* implies an attractive quality, something noble or ideal. 'Model' captures these connotations but implies a second nuance important in this context: Jesus should be emulated."[56] If John's intentions were merely to convey that the "Good Shepherd" was exceptionally moral or upright, then the more common adjective *agathos* would have sufficed. However, the use of *kalos* indicates "exemplar" or "ideal," namely that the subsequent shepherds should emulate the example set by the Good Shepherd. Tidball makes an essential point in this line of thinking: "All the biblical imagery of the shepherd reaches its climax here. Jesus is the true pastor of his flock. Others must model themselves on him and can work only under his direction."[57]

In conclusion, the contrast between the Good Shepherd in John 10 and the wicked shepherds in Ezekiel 34 is stark. The selfish and corrupt leaders of Israel exploited and neglected God's flock, causing them to scatter and be devoured by wild beasts. Their leadership was characterized by self-interest and disregard for the welfare of the sheep. In response, God promised to be their shepherd by sending the Davidic Shepherd who would rescue and care for his scattered sheep and unite them into his new community (Ezek 34:11–12; John 10:16). This Shepherd is Jesus Christ, who embodies selflessness and sacrifice, motivated by love for the sheep and obedience to the Father. His sacrificial leadership stands in contrast to the wicked human shepherds who put their interests first. Jesus laid down his life for the sheep, serving as a pastoral model for all following him. Therefore, to be a true disciple and shepherd, one must emulate the Good Shepherd, loving and caring for God's flock with selflessness and sacrifice.

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[56] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 211.

[57] Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds*, 138.

The Chief Shepherd and His Undershepherds in the New Testament

The tradition of appointing mediatorial shepherds over the people in the Old Testament is repeated in the New Testament when Jesus appoints shepherds over his sheep, the church, due to his physical absence. These New Testament shepherds fulfill God's promise in Jeremiah 23:4: "I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the Lord." Regarding this, Witmer observes, "Could Jeremiah be looking forward with prophetic vision to the calling of faithful shepherds who would carry on the mission of Jesus the Good Shepherd in the days of the New Covenant? The Lord would continue to care for his people through Spirit-filled, -gifted, and -called undershepherds."[58]

Who are these human shepherds of the NT? Paul explains in a larger context of Ephesians 4 that as the victorious king who defeated the power of death and ascended into heaven, Jesus Christ endowed the church with many gifts, the pastoral office being one of them. In contrast to Romans 12 or 1 Corinthians 12:4–11, where gifts refer to ministries or functions, gifts in Ephesians "[are] narrowed to particular ministers of the Word."[59] In Ephesians 4:11–12, the apostle says, "And he [Christ] 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." Although the English word "pastor" is not mentioned here in the English Standard Version, there is no disagreement among the biblical commentators that the term "shepherd" (ποιμένας) refers to the office of pastor instituted by Christ and that which the early church embraced.

An interesting fact about the term "pastor" is that it is used only here in the New Testament to refer to a ministry in the church. Lincoln explains that the word "describe[s] [the] function in Acts 20:28 and 1 Pet 5:1–4 and Peter's activity in regard to

[58] Witmer, *The Shepherd Leader*, 33–34.

[59] Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC 42 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 249.

the Church in John 21:16. It suggests the exercise of leadership through nurture, care, and guidance."[60] In fact, in the New Testament, the words "pastor," "elder," and "overseer" (bishop) are used interchangeably to refer to the church leaders in charge of the shepherding ministry. The close relationship between the words "elder/overseer" and "shepherd" is seen in 1 Peter 2:25, where our Lord is portrayed as the "Shepherd (ποιμήν) and Bishop (ἐπίσκοπος) of your souls." It is also confirmed in Peter's exhortation to spiritual leaders in 1 Peter 5:2, where "he exhorts them to 'tend [shepherd, poimnate] and the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight [episkopounte].'"[61] The parity or equality of eldership is also confirmed in Acts 20:28, where Paul exhorts the elders of the church at Ephesus to "keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (ἐπισκόπους). Be shepherds (ποιμαίνειν) of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood" (NIV). It is important to note that Paul spoke to the Ephesian church elders in this passage (Acts 20:17). In other words, he equated the office of the elder to the pastor and overseer. Thus, he used the terms interchangeably. Concerning this, and referencing John Calvin, Timothy Witmer argues that "according to the use of the Scripture, bishop (episkopoi) differ nothing from elders (presbuteroi)."[62] F. F. Bruce also agrees with Calvin's assessment: "There was in apostolic times no distinction between elders (presbyters) and bishops such as we find from the second century onwards: the leaders of the Ephesian church are indiscriminately described as elders, bishops, (i.e. superintendents) and shepherds (or pastors)."[63]

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[60] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 250.

[61] Samuel E. Waldron et al., *In Defense of Parity: A Presentation of the Parity or Equality of Elders in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Truth for Eternity Ministries, 1997), 11.

[62] Witmer, *The Shepherd Leader*, 38.

[63] F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, rev. ed, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 415, quoted in Witmer, *The Shepherd Leader*, 38

What theological implications can we derive from this biblical truth? We need to acknowledge that the pastoral office is sacred since Christ institutes it. In other words, Christ intends to care for his flock primarily through his undershepherds (pastors/elders). Therefore, the secular business or therapy model of church ministry is bizarrely unusual and unorthodox to Christ's original plan. The biblical shepherding done by the pastors is how the Lord wants his sheep to receive his care.

Called to Follow the Good Shepherd

In 1 Peter 2:25 and 5:1–4, the role of human shepherds is described in relation to the Good Shepherd. Essentially, the elders' identity and calling depend on their relation to their Master:

> For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (1 Pet 2:25)

> So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the 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, 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. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. (1 Pet 5:1–4)

Tidball argues that "all the biblical imagery of the shepherd reaches its climax here. Jesus is the true pastor of his flock. Others must model themselves on him and can work only under his direction."[64] In this line of thinking, Paul Minear also notes, "God is ultimately the shepherd-ruler of this flock; Jesus is the chief shepherd; Jesus appoints undershepherds, but the flock remains God's possession."[65] The instructions given by the apostle Peter regarding Christian eldership teach us two critical things concerning the elders' calling. First, the flock belongs to Christ, so elders must adhere closely to the shepherding model the Chief Shepherd sets to care for them properly. Secondly, their

[64] Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds*, 138.

[65] Minear and Keck, *Images of the Church in the New Testament*, 85.

calling is to lead the flock so that the sheep may ultimately recognize and follow the voice of the Good Shepherd (John 10:3, 16; 13:15).

Qualifications of Elders

Christ specifically calls elders as his representatives to lead his flock, and there are three vital qualifications for elders to lead faithfully by modeling him: (1) calling, (2) godly character, and (3) aptitude. These three categories for elder qualification are apparent in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9. First, concerning calling, there must be both internal aspiration and external affirmation to serve the flock. More specifically, an elder should have an internal desire from God to serve the church and external confirmation of his calling through the respect of God's people (1 Tim 3:1, 2, 7; Titus 1:5). Second, as a leader who represents the Good Shepherd to the flock, he must have a godly character and lifestyle. For example, he must be above reproach (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:6–7), sober-minded and not a drunkard (1 Tim 3:2–3; Titus 1:8–7), self-controlled (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8), hospitable (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8), and not arrogant or quarrelsome (1 Tim 3:3; Titus 1:7). Last, elders should have the ability to lead the flock. He must show his aptitude to manage the household of God by managing his own house well (1 Tim 3:4–5; Titus 1:6–7). Most significantly, as an undershepherd who must lead the flock through God's Word, he must be apt to teach (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:9).

Elder's Duties

The shepherding metaphor in the Bible can be used to illustrate the role of pastors and elders. While their tasks may be defined in ecclesiastical terms such as preaching, administering sacraments, and making visits, the theological significance of the shepherding imagery provides essential theological concepts for pastoral ministries. Nonetheless, narrowing down the pastor's work through the shepherding imagery is complicated. As demonstrated in the previous section dealing with Ezekiel 34, Witmer summarizes the shepherding functions to knowing, leading, feeding, and protecting,

while Laniak lists them as presence, protection, provision, and guidance. Moreover, some theologians would add the aspect of healing and saving. Despite different viewpoints, I argue that there are five shepherding functions of pastors revealed through the shepherding metaphor: Knowing, Leading, Gathering, Protecting, and Nurturing. It is important to note that these five pastoral duties should be conducted at personal and public levels.

Knowing

The depiction of the Good Shepherd in John 10 extends beyond Christ's sacrificial love for his flock. It also emphasizes the deep, personal understanding and mutual knowledge between the sheep and the Shepherd.[66] Jesus declares, "I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me" (John 10:14). Thus, what distinguishes Christ as the Good Shepherd is his intimate knowledge of each member of his flock and their reciprocal recognition and familiarity with him as their shepherd. This intimate and mutual knowledge between the Shepherd and his flock is similarly depicted in the Old Testament, where there is a mutual acknowledgment of knowing between God and his people (Pss 23:1; 139:1–9; Isa 43:1; Jer 1:5).

While human undershepherds cannot perfectly replicate the unique and intimate knowledge shared between Jesus and his sheep as the Son of God, biblical imagery of shepherding demonstrates that elders should make deliberate efforts to know the flock to properly care for them. For instance, although a pastor cannot personally know every individual in the church, the Bible instructs the pastors to know and care for the sheep through delegation and allocation of God's flock in manageable size.

The allocation of portions of God's flock in manageable size is first found in the Old Testament. The most well-known passage is Exodus 18:13–26, where "Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, chiefs of

[66] Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 387.

thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens" (v. 25). Following Jethro's suggestion, Moses, who was overwhelmed with leadership responsibilities, secured others to judges to become the "heads over the people" together with him. According to Tidball, Exodus 18 does not prescribe a specific model for pastoral ministry. Instead, it provides a valuable lesson in leadership that pastors can learn from. Through Jethro's wisdom, Moses discovered the principle of delegation, which serves as a noteworthy reminder for pastors in their ministry approach.[67]

Moses's readiness to embrace his father-in-law's advice illustrates a level of flexibility in how pastors can delegate the flock to capable leaders, dividing them into manageable portions to offer proximate leadership. Subsequently, we learn that God selected seventy elders from among the leaders and bestowed upon them a portion of the Spirit that rested upon Moses. God instructed these individuals, saying, "They shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you may not bear it yourself alone" (Num 11:17). As it is evident in the Exodus account, the principle of sharing the leader's responsibility appears prominent.

The concept of distributing pastoral responsibilities appears persistent in the New Testament's teachings on eldership found in passages such as 1 Peter 5:3 and Acts 20:28. First, a careful analysis of τῶν κλήρων (those in your charge) in 1 Peter 5:3 indicates that elders are entrusted with sheep in a manageable portion to know and care for them. In other words, Christ has delegated a manageable allotment of his flock to the different elders so that the sheep may have at least one elder to look after them. As BDAG indicates, the κλῆροι in 1 Peter 5:3 "seem to denote the 'flock' as a whole, i.e. the various parts of the people of God which have been assigned as 'portions' to individual elders or shepherds."[68] This concept of elders overseeing the flock in portions such as

[67] Tidball, *Skillful Shepherd*, 20.

[68] BDAG, 548.

local congregations or house churches is also noticeable in various places in the NT (Acts 14:23; Phil 1:1; Titus 1:5).[69]

The allocation of portions of Christ's flock to specific elders is also evident in Paul's charge to Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28. Paul commands the elders of Ephesus to pay careful attention to "all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).[70] Paul did not charge these elders in Ephesus to care for every Christians in the entire Roman world, but only those whom the Holy Spirit entrusted to them. Paul reminds them that their flock is a precious people of God obtained through Christ's blood. Thus, he charges the Ephesian elders to take special care in protecting "all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit made you [them] overseers," from heretical teachings and deceptions of the false teachers that will arrive soon in the Ephesian church community (Acts 20:29–30).

Second, as indicated in Acts 20:28, caring for and protecting the sheep requires careful watching of the flock, which necessitates personal knowledge of each sheep. In this verse, Paul uses three different words to highlight this task of close understanding and nurturing: "Keep watch (προσέχετε) over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (ἐπισκόπους). Be shepherds (ποιμαίνειν) of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood" (Acts 20:28 NIV). According to James Visscher, the word προσέχετε expresses the concept of constant watchfulness, emphasizing the responsibility of those overseeing and

[69] In expounding on κλήρων, Clowney claims that "The phrase in 5:3 is literally 'not as lording it over the lots'. The term klēros, 'lot', is used in the Septuagint to describe the portions of the land of Israel assigned by lot to tribes and families. What are these 'portions' allotted to elders? The 'portion' may be an office, a specific function (cf. 4:10), or it may be a group of people; a 'house-church', or portion of a congregation assigned to an elder. If Peter is thinking of the elders of the whole region collectively, the 'portions' may be simply the local churches under their care." Edmund P. Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter: The Way of the Cross*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 202.

[70] David Peterson explains "the church of God" in Acts 20:28 in these words: "Such language can be applied to the church as the whole body of Christ (cf. Eph. 1:14; Tit. 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:9), but there is great significance and rhetorical force in recognising its immediate reference to the Ephesian situation." David Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 569.

shepherding God's people.[71] Visscher argues that, therefore, pastoral visitation is an essential duty of the elders to effectively fulfill their task of carefully watching over and knowing the flock.

Paul demonstrates such pastoral effort in his discourse with the Ephesian elders. For example, in verse 20, he explains that he did not only focus on public teaching but also visited "house to house" to teach Ephesian Christians. Also in verse 31, he reminds the elders that he admonished "everyone" with tears, which indicates that he was active in the personal ministry of the Word. Paul was a shepherd who made efforts to personally know the flock under his care to protect them adequately through the admonishment of God's Word.

Similarly, Oden supports this idea, stating that through visitation, pastors can continuously gain direct and immediate knowledge of the flock. Although visitation is not the only method of acquiring the knowledge of church members, it is a biblical form of pastoral ministry to understand the needs and well-being of the congregation they serve (Acts 20:20; 1 Pet 5:2–3; Jas 5:14–15). Witmer also highlights that the first step in shepherding is to know the sheep of the Chief Shepherd, who confess their faith in him within the congregation entrusted to them.[72]

Just as a shepherd needs to know well the condition of his flock and give attention to them for effective shepherding care, the elders need to know the situations of their flock well (Prov 27:23). David Dickson captures the essence of intimately knowing the sheep for elders: "He must be acquainted with them all, old and young, their history, occupations, habits, and ways of thinking. They and their children should be their

[71] James Visscher, "The Elder and Visitation," Christian Library, last modified 2006, https://www.christianstudylibrary.org/article/elder-and-visitation.

[72] Witmer, *The Shepherd Leader*, 110. Witmer argues that the NT repeatedly teaches that Christ has entrusted particular elders with authority to lead particular churches (Acts 14:23; 20:17; Titus 1:5; Jas 5:14; 1 Pet 5:2). Elders must therefore have a keen understanding of which individuals have been truly converted and are members of Christ's flock.

personal friends, so that they naturally turn to him as to one on whom they can depend as a kind and sympathizing friend and a faithful counselor."[73]

A single pastor personally knowing every individual in a large church or even a medium-sized church may be unrealistic. However, the biblical consideration is whether the church has designated elders to oversee the congregation in manageable portions, ensuring that each member has at least one shepherd to guide them spiritually. The assigned shepherd should also train and work together with lay leaders to effectively care for the congregation because a pastor cannot effectively minister to the flock alone (Eph 4:11–12). Therefore, without such a pluralistic and mutualistic pastoral structure, adequately caring for congregation members becomes difficult because the spiritual situation of church members remains unknown to shepherds.

Leading

In the New Testament, elders' leadership is often expressed through the verb "to rule" (προΐστημι) (Rom 12:8; 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 5:17). The word carries a dual connotation that could mean either "to rule, direct, be at the head of" and "to show concern for, care for, and give aid," as BDAG defines.[74] For this reason, Van Dam defines προΐστημι as "servant-leadership" or "caring leadership."[75] The undershepherds of the Good Shepherd must lead the flock through Christ's loving and caring leadership. In that sense, their leadership is not like the world's coercive or authoritarian leadership but resembles Christ's servant leadership (Matt 20:25–28).

Shepherds should lead with a caring spirit modeling after Christ's leadership (1 Pet 5:2–4). This means they should not rely on their plans and opinions but instead

[73] David Dickson, *The Elder and His Work*, ed. George Kennedy McFarland and Philip Graham Ryken (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2004), 25.

[74] BDAG, 870. See that 1 Thessalonians 5:12 is used in both senses in the Lexicon.

[75] Cornelis Van Dam, *The Elder: Today's Ministry Rooted in All of Scripture*, Explorations in Biblical Theology (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2009), 152.

lead according to the teachings of Christ, who is the Chief Shepherd of the church. In order to do this, elders must have a deep understanding of the Word of God and be able to apply its teachings to various situations. For this reason, formal seminary education is not a requirement for elders. However, they must have a thorough knowledge of the Word of God to effectively guide their congregation and help them recognize the voice of the Great Shepherd.[76] The foundation of effective elder leadership is rooted in their deep and broad familiarity with the Word of God.

Elders are not only instructed to imitate Christ, but they are also called to be living examples for the congregation, inspiring them to grow spiritually by following their lead (1 Cor 11:1; Heb 13:7; 1 Tim 4:12–13; 1 Pet 5:3). First Timothy 3:2–7, which details the requirements for an elder, emphasizes that the congregation's imitation should not primarily be based on an elder's ministry abilities, but rather on their godly character that reflects Christ. Therefore, in 1 Corinthians, Paul invites Christians to imitate him (4:16). Elsewhere, he asks them to indirectly imitate Christ by imitating him (11:1). According to Linda Belleville, "In so doing, he [Paul] calls them to a life of discipleship that has as its exemplars himself immediately and Christ ultimately."[77] Following the example of Paul, all elders must be qualified to lead the congregation by modeling to ultimately disciple them into the image of Christ.

Gathering

Jesus, who comes from the line of David, is the divine Shepherd himself. He descends to Earth to call and gather the lost, reconcile them, and bring them back into God's fold. For this reason, during his earthly ministry, Jesus claimed that the Son of

[76] Van Dam, *The Elder*, 152.

[77] Linda L. Belleville, "'Imitate Me, Just as I Imitate Christ': Discipleship in the Corinthian Correspondence," in *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker, McMaster New Testament Studies (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 170.

Man came to seek out and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10 NRSV).[78] The fulfillment of the OT prophecies concerning God gathering his people (Isa 40:11; Jer 23:3; Ezek 34:12) is accomplished through Christ (John 10:3–4, 16). Jesus "surrounded himself with the exiles of Israel to gather God's people, forging a renewed community out of them."[79] By his death and resurrection, Jesus ultimately brings together and establishes a new human community that is unified in him (Rom 12:4–5; 1 Cor 12:12–13; Gal 3:28; Eph 4:4–6).

Nevertheless, the ministry of gathering, initiated by Jesus, was entrusted to the early church leaders. The NT does not directly address the involvement of elders in gathering the scattered sheep of God utilizing the shepherding metaphor. However, as discussed above, a biblical-theological analysis of the shepherding metaphor reveals that Christ's undershepherds are called to participate in his gathering ministry, which was inaugurated through his death and resurrection. The progression of Christ's ministry of gathering starts with the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt 10:6) and would reach toward "all nations" (Luke 24:47) and to the "ends of the earth" (Acts 13:47).

The significance of the elders' ministry of gathering can be understood by interpreting the shepherding metaphor within a biblical-theological framework. For example, in Matthew 12:30, Jesus teaches, "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters." John Nolland interprets this verse in light of the OT passages concerning wicked shepherds who scattered the sheep of God due to their selfish and irresponsible actions (Ezek 28:25; 29:13; 34:13, 21).[80] Laniak's argument also agrees with Nolland's perspective, as they both interpret this verse (along with Luke 19:10) in light of the Old Testament undershepherds. Laniak claims, "The

[78] It is notable how frequently Jesus used the word "gather" in his ministry (Matt 12:30; 23:37; Luke 8:4; 12:1; John 11:52).

[79] Timothy S. Laniak, *While Shepherds Watch Their Flocks: Rediscovering Biblical Leadership* (Matthews, NC: ShepherdLeader, 2007), 85.

[80] John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 504.

instructions of Jesus empower his undershepherds to join him in gathering the lost and healing the injured."[81]

Concerning the elders' gathering ministry through the Word, Van Dam observes that "in simplest terms, it [gathering] is the communal heeding of the voice of the Good Shepherd that keeps the flock together."[82] Elders must remember that their primary ministry is to serve as instruments of the Chief Shepherd by proclaiming his Word to gather the flock. Through the Holy Spirit's workings within the Word, elders gather the confused, the straying, and the rebellious back to Christ so that they can rejoin God's flock. That is to say, by proclaiming the Word of the Good Shepherd, the elders are enabled by the Holy Spirit to bring back the sheep through both preaching and counseling ministry to the flock, which is the church.

In sum, the pastor's ministry of gathering can be understood in two distinct ways: a ministry to those who have strayed and to those who are completely lost. In Ezekiel 34:4, God describes various distressing situations of the sheep without a shepherd, highlighting how they were not provided with the necessary care and attention. The verse states, "the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought," indicating that there are both strayed sheep in need of guidance (Gal 6:1; Jas 5:19–20) and lost sheep requiring active search and rescue (Luke 15:1–7; 2 Tim 4:5). In light of this, I argue that addressing the needs of the strayed sheep involves employing the ministry of the Word through counseling to guide them back to the community of believers (Acts 20:31; Col 1:28). Conversely, reaching out to the lost sheep necessitates the ministry of the Word in the form of evangelism and mission to bring them into the fellowship of the Church of Christ.

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[81] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 186.

[82] Van Dam, *The Elder*, 153.

Concerning the pastor's work for evangelism, Alastair Campbell claims that pastoral ministry includes evangelism, referring to 2 Timothy 4:5, where the apostle Paul urges Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist." He asserts,

> The work of an evangelist was inseparable from explaining the scripture, that is, from the work of a teacher, and this will still be true today. The scriptures provide the evangelist with his essential resource, so that however far from that center the evangelist may need to begin in his work of building bridges for the gospel, it is through an understanding of the scriptures that he will be seeking to bring his hearers in the end.[83]

Interpreting the verse more broadly, D. A. Carson argues that "'do the work of an evangelist' may well be an exhortation to engage in evangel ministry, in gospel ministry, which includes what we today mean by evangelism but should not be restricted to it."[84] That is to say, the pastoral teaching ministry, both preaching and counseling, encompasses an evangelistic aspect.

Protecting

The biblical theology of shepherding displays that the Good Shepherd sacrificed his life to protect his flock from the ultimate eschatological danger, God's judgment. However, human shepherds are responsible for safeguarding the flock of Christ from all the hazards and perils of the wilderness until they safely reach the Promised Land, all while diligently following the guidance of the Chief Shepherd. For this reason, Paul warned the Ephesians elders that "after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29–30, NIV). Jesus also warned his flock, saying, "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves" (Matt 7:15, NIV).

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[83] Alastair V. Campbell, "'Do the Work of an Evangelist,'" *Evangelical Quarterly* 64, no. 2 (April 1992): 128.

[84] Donald A. Carson, "Do the Work of an Evangelist," *Themelios* 39, no. 1 (April 2014): 4.

Until the people of God reach their final destination, passing through the wilderness of life, there will always be wolves and false teachers taking advantage of them with heretical doctrines and selfish motivations. For this reason, it is crucial for the pastors and elders to "be on guard" as Paul exhorts in Acts 20:31. They are "to live out their 'watch care' of themselves and the congregation through shepherding and admonishing."[85] Given the possibility of falling into temptations, becoming false teachers, or manipulating the Word for selfish gain, they must remain vigilant, watching over themselves and diligently identifying any wolves among the flock (Acts 20:28–30; 1 Pet 5:8; 2 Pet 3:17).

The responsibility of protection in a local congregation extends beyond just the elders; it involves all believers. While the elders have the specific duty of watching over the entire flock to safeguard them, the Bible emphasizes mutual care and protection among members (Matt 18:15–16; Col 3:16). Therefore, elders are tasked with equipping and building up each Christian so that they can mutually exhort and admonish one another, preparing them to withstand the fierce attacks of the enemy (Eph 4:11–12; 1 Pet 5:1–3; Rom 15:14; Col 1:28; 3:16).

Nurturing

God warned through the prophet Hosea, "My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge" (Hos 4:6). As a child who is malnourished eventually dies, so do God's sheep whom the Word of God does not adequately nourish. For this reason, Christ commanded Peter. "Feed my lambs . . . Take care of my sheep . . . Feed my sheep" (John 21:15–17). The threefold repetition of the Good Shepherd "underlined how important it is

[85] William J. Larkin Jr., *Acts*, IVPNTC 5 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1995), 295, Logos.

that Christ's flock be nurtured by all those entrusted with its care."[86] How should pastors and elders feed the flock then?

Throughout Scripture, God has used figurative language to express that his Word is nourishment for his flock (Deut 8:3; Matt 4:4). In the same way that the Israelites in the wilderness depended on daily manna from God to survive, Christians require his Word to endure the challenges of life, recognizing that they are embodied souls. As beings with both a physical body and a spiritual soul, they require the sustenance of the Word from heaven, just as they require physical sustenance. Specifically, they require Christ, who embodies the bread and living water from heaven, as revealed in the Bible (John 6:25–35). In that sense, the major nurturing work of elders is to point God's people to Christ.

Also, to nurture is to bind up the wounds of the flock. In Ezekiel 34:4, God rebuked the evil shepherds of Israel: "You have not . . . bound up the broken." There are many false physicians of the soul in the world claiming to have remedies for the broken. However, if the balm they apply is not God's Word, they only offer superficial remedies. Scripture teaches us that God "has demonstrated his care by sending Christ to bandage those who have been broken. Jesus was the long-awaited One who came to crush the curse of sin and death,"[87] the ultimate brokenness of humanity. Jesus is the balm that cures the brokenhearted, and wise pastors should administer the medicine of Christ in God's Word to the wounded souls. For this reason, Richard Baxter said, "A minister is not to be merely a public preacher, but to be known as a counsellor for their souls, as the physicians is for their bodies, and the lawyer for their estates."[88]

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[86] Van Dam, *The Elder*, 155.

[87] Dale Johnson, "Shepherds Must Bind Up the Broken," in *Pastoral Ministry: The Ministry of a Shepherd*, ed. Deron J. Biles (Nashville: B & H, 2017), 90.

[88] Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (1862; repr, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1999), 96.

Elder's Authority

Edmund Clowney contends that the responsibility to serve Christ and advance his kingdom is not exclusive to the elected officials of the church, like deacons and elders.[89] Instead, all Christians are empowered to serve and hold a position of authority in his church, as a royal priesthood and a holy nation, with the duty of proclaiming Christ's name to the world (1 Pet 2:9). Clowney terms this as the "general office," which is the universal office of all Christians. However, he also observes in the NT the existence of a distinct office in the church—the special office—filled by elected and ordained officers who are recognized by the church for their calling and gifts and entrusted with the spiritual authority to guide, gather, and nurture God's flock as Christ's undershepherds.

The authority of the elders is not self-derived but instead derived from Christ. One cannot assume the role of an elder simply by expressing a desire to serve the church. Instead, he must have an internal calling by Christ (Jer 1:4–5; Acts 20:28), and the body of Christ must acknowledge the person's suitability for the role through ordination (Acts 1:15–26; 6:1–6; 1 Tim 3:2–13). In that sense, it is crucial to understand that the congregation's submission to the elders stems from their obedience to Christ and not fear. Simultaneously, the elders must maintain a reverent fear of the Lord, who appointed them to their positions of authority and use their power solely to please Christ and serve the church. As Ezekiel 34, the undershepherds who have abused their power and authority will face God's judgment, but those who faithfully serve Christ through care for his sheep will "receive the unfading crown of glory" (1 Pet 5:4).[90]

Tidball argues, "Their [elders'] authority rests on possessing the commission and possessing the gift; without those, they could have no authority, whatever their

[89] Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church*, CCT (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 207.

[90] Reformed theologians like Louis Berkhof have recognized that the pastoral vocation encompasses two aspects: internal and external calling. Internal calling refers to a remarkable sign from God that signifies one's calling. On the other hand, external calling is a call that occurs through the involvement of the Church. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 587.

office."[91] In other words, the elder is appointed by Christ, and their authority comes from him alone (Acts 20:28; Eph 4:11; 1 Tim 4:14). Thus, as Alexander Strauch noted, "As shepherds of the church, elders have been given authority to lead and protect the local church" by Christ, not to be domineering over them.[92]

Therefore, Witmer claims that the elders' "exercise of the authority is designed to serve the well-being of those under its care."[93] In other words, elders must recognize that they serve Christ's church with both authority and care. Christ does not give them gifts and calls to rule over people for selfish reasons but to serve the spiritual needs of God's flock as servant leaders (1 Pet 5:1–3). The Chief Shepherd said that he came "not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt 20:28). Thus, Laniak claims that "good shepherding is expressed by decisions and behaviors that benefit the 'flock,' often at great personal cost. It calls for the benevolent use of authority. . . . Some situations require militant protection and discipline, others beckon for gentle nurture."[94] Regardless of whether they are admonishing, encouraging, or helping the member (1 Thess 5:14), the elders must utilize their authority solely to benefit the church. Consequently, their conduct and judgments must be guided by the Word of God rather than their personal views.

Since Christ appoints undershepherds for the well-being of his flock, the flock is called to submit to the authority of the elders. Hebrews 13:15 says, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you." In other words, the sheep must submit to authority for their mutual

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[91] Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds*, 88.

[92] Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*, rev. ed. (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth, 1995), 97.

[93] Witmer, *The Shepherd Leader*, 89.

[94] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 247.

benefit. As much as the elders are called to submit their lives humbly for the church's benefit, so is the church called to demonstrate mutual submission and respect to its leaders. This means that the church must recognize and respect the authority of its elders and willingly submit to their guidance and direction. Such submission is not meant to be a form of blind obedience but rather a mutual relationship in which the elders lead with humility, and the congregation follows with trust and respect. When both parties submit to each other in this manner, the result is a harmonious community focused on serving and glorifying God.[95]

God's Telos of Shepherding

God's primary telos as the Shepherd of his people is to ensure their well-being, of which he solely determines the definition. This objective is accomplished through redemptive history, wherein the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, is sent to die sacrificially for God's sheep on the cross. After three days, he rises, ascends to the heavenly realm, and is crowned as the Shepherd-king of all those who believe in him. Christ continues caring for his flock until he returns by his eternal Word, the Holy Spirit, and appointed human undershepherds. In light of this divine shepherding objective and means, this section will examine two key aspects concerning God's telos of shepherding: (1) the eschatological goal of the Shepherd and (2) the role of human shepherds in the last days.

The Eschatological Goal of the Shepherd

According to Bailey, Psalm 23 is a significant chapter in the Bible that reveals God's divine function as the Shepherd and his relationship with his sheep.[96] More

[95] Laniak claims that "authority without compassion leads to harsh authoritarianism. Compassion without authority leads to social chaos." Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 247.

[96] Bailey, *The Good Shepherd*, 31–32.

importantly, it reveals God's purpose for shepherding, which is to meet all of his flock's needs for His name's sake (Ps 23:1, 3). In that sense, the entire shepherd motif throughout Scripture depicts a story of God providing for his people's needs by knowing, leading, gathering, protecting, and nurturing them, despite their rebellion, ultimately for his glory. In Revelation 7:16–17, God's shepherding telos is finally realized when he grants his people eternal peace by dwelling with them eternally as their Shepherd: "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb amid the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Rev 7:16–17).

However, the NT writers teach that the eschatological fulfillment of the divine shepherd's purpose is not only something to look forward to in the future but has already occurred through Jesus Christ. In other words, God's shepherding telos must be comprehended in an "already and not yet" redemptive-historical framework. This eschatological viewpoint is common in many Pauline corpora, though it may appear ambiguous in the shepherding metaphor. Nonetheless, it is not absent. For instance, the apostle Peter explains that Christians once strayed away from God in their sins as the OT prophets prophesied (Isa 53:6), but they now have returned to the Shepherd because of Christ's suffering and death (Isa 6:10).[97]

> For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (1 Pet 2:25)
>
> For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit. (1 Pet 3:18)

[97] Thomas Schreiner helpfully explains that 1 Peter 2:25 alludes to Isaiah 53:6 (straying) and 6:10 (returning). He asserts, "The combination of 'return' and 'heal' is another piece of evidence that the healing in view involves the forgiveness received at conversion. Believers are no longer lost sheep but 'have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.' We are reminded again of the uniqueness of Jesus' life and suffering." Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, NAC 27 (Nashville: B & H, 2003), 146.

According to Peter, God's people were gathered to live in his presence through the once and final death of Christ, who is referred to as the Shepherd and Overseer of their souls. The authors of the Gospels also explain this mysterious eschatological reality through Christ's fulfillment of Zechariah 13:7b: "I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered" (Mark 14:27).[98] It is evident that "striking" refers to crucifixion, in which the Good Shepherd receives undeserved punishment and lays down his life to save his sheep (John 10:11). Thus, the irony of the Shepherd is that he is also "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Laniak claims, "The death of the messianic Lamb is his greatest act of love (15:13). When he is 'lifted up' he will draw all persons to himself (3:14; 12:32–34). By this single death, like a seed the unique death of this Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep, he will gather and unify the 'scattered children of God' (11:52)."[99]

Peter confirms the shepherding telos of God in the last days as a twofold reality. On the one hand, the first reality is that Christians have "already" come under the eternal pastoring of the Good Shepherd (1 Pet 2:24–25). On the other hand, the second reality is that they have "not yet" reached the final destination, which is the place where they will dwell eternally with their Shepherd (Rev 7:16–17). Therefore, the Shepherd faithfully gathers, nurtures, and leads his flock (the church) through his Word, Spirit, and the human undershepherds until they reach the promised land at the final consummation of the redemptive history.[100] Thomas Schreiner's explanation concerning Christ's once

[98] As Laniak explains, "The image of scattered sheep in various OT passages was considered the result of bad (or no) leaders (cf. Jer. 23:2; Ezek 34:4–6)." In Zechariah, the Lord promises to save "the flock of his people' (9:16), people who 'wander like sheep oppressed for lack of a shepherd' (10:2). YHWH's 'anger burns against the shepherds . . . I will punish the *leaders*' (10:3)." Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 180. Hence, in contrast to the evil shepherds of the OT, Christ gave his life for his sheep so that they may have eternal life in him.

[99] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 220.

[100] For this reason, Peter calls the church sojourners and exiles going through the wilderness of life to reach their home (1 Pet 2:11). Living in this eschatological tension, Christians are called to follow the Shepherd-King, who suffered and died for them, by participating in his suffering and death (1 Pet 2:21; 4:12–14).

and for all suffering and Christ's suffering in the last days found in 1 Peter 2:24 is helpful:

> The purpose of Christ's death (hina) was not merely to provide forgiveness but to empower his people to "live for righteousness." This is the main point of v. 24, not Christ's atoning death, for Peter emphasized here the purpose of his death. Righteousness (dikaiosynē) is not forensic here, as is evident from its connection with the verb "live" (zēsōmen). Living to righteousness becomes a reality by dying "to sins."[101]

Thus, Christians' participation in suffering with Christ does not mean that the atoning work of Christ is in some ways incomplete and requires our suffering in addition. Instead, Christians are called to follow Christ by participating in Christ's suffering because "following the slain Lamb is a mark of their identity with him."[102]

Identifying with Christ through Suffering in the Last Days

Pauline theology presents a fully developed theological concept of Christians' participation in the sufferings of Christ in the last days. While Paul did not employ the imagery of shepherding to explain Christian suffering, comprehending his theology can enhance our understanding of Peter's exhortation to follow the Lamb through suffering (1 Pet 2:21; 4:12–14). In that sense, it is essential to consider Paul's understanding of Christians' suffering about following Jesus.[103] Thus, in this section, we will explore a

[101] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 146.

[102] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 231.

[103] The concept of Christian suffering and following Jesus through the last days is found in Revelation as James Hamilton examines in "Suffering in Revelation." Examining Revelation with Daniel he argues that "… Revelation describes the entire inter-advental age. Throughout this age the church suffers and is persecuted. Revelation teaches the church precisely what many in the world now experience: that the people of God will suffer *and* see the triumph of the gospel as it makes its long march to the ends of the earth." James M. Hamilton, "Suffering in Revelation: The Fulfillment of the Messianic Woes: Southern Baptist Journal of Theology," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 17, no. 4 (October 1, 2013): 44.

crucial Pauline verse (Phil 3:10–11) that addresses Christian suffering, aiming to deepen our comprehension of 1 Peter 2:21 by incorporating Richard Gaffin's interpretation.[104]

Philippians 3:10–11 reads, "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead." Philippians 3:8–11 is a single sentence in the Greek text, and 3:10 provides a supplementary aim derived from the overarching purpose of being found in Christ (3:9). Gaffin observes, "Paul desires and aspires to be united with Christ, not only for justification but now also for sanctification, for the particular facet of sanctification that he is concerned to bring out here."[105] Gaffin explains that the particular fact Paul desires to explain is a noetic aspect of sanctification. For Paul, sanctification is related explicitly to knowing Christ and "the power of his resurrection" (3:10). This "knowing" is not an informational or cognitive understanding of Christ but personal or existential knowledge that comes from being united with Christ in his resurrection, suffering, and death.

So, as a Christian who already received the resurrection life by being united to Christ, Paul desires to intimately know his Lord and the power of his resurrection working in him. Remarkably, Gaffin interprets that to know Christ and the power of resurrection is equivalent to sharing in his sufferings and becoming "like him in his death . . . that he may attain the resurrection from the dead (3:10–11)."[106] It should be noted, as Gaffin highlights, that the sequence must not be misunderstood. Paul is not saying that

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[104] Geerhardus Vos and Herman Ridderbos are the forebears of Gaffin's theology of inaugurated eschatology. Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952); Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

[105] Richard B. Gaffin Jr., *In the Fullness of Time: An Introduction to the Biblical Theology of Acts and Paul* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 407.

[106] Gaffin supports his view by grammatically arguing that the two instances of "and" in verse 10 are not additive but rather explanatory. That is to say, the sequence (resurrection-suffering-death-resurrection) should not be viewed as cars lining up one after another in a train, but rather like Russian dolls, where opening one reveals another inside, and so on. This means that resurrection life working in a Christian is manifested through his fellowship of suffering and death with Christ. Gaffin, *In the Fullness of Time*, 407–8.

because he has resurrection life he now also needs to share in Christ's suffering and death. Instead, he claims that "experiencing the fellowship of Christ's suffering is not in addition to experiencing his resurrection power. Rather, the former is a function of the latter; resurrection power is displayed in the fellowship of suffering. Paul is saying, Do you want to know what it means to know Christ? It means experiencing the power of his resurrection as the fellowship of suffering."[107]

A biblical-theological synthesis of Philippians 3:10–11 and the theology of following the Lamb through suffering is found here. It is crucial to understand that the congregation's submission to the elders stems from their obedience to Christ, not fear. Simultaneously, the elders must maintain a reverent fear of the Lord, who appointed them to their positions of authority and use their power solely to please Christ and serve the church. As Ezekiel 34, the undershepherds who have abused their power and authority will face God's judgment, but those who faithfully serve Christ through care for his sheep will "receive the unfading crown of glory" (1 Pet 5:4). Here, it is crucial to understand that the congregation's submission to the elders stems from their obedience to Christ and not from fear. First Peter 2:21 teaches that following Christ is to suffer with him, and to suffer with him is to experience the power of his resurrection. In other words, Christians follow the Good Shepherd who suffered and died for them by participating in his suffering and death, which is the only way to intimately know and experience the power of resurrection life already working in their lives through union with him.

In the New Testament, it is essential to note that suffering and death encompass more than just persecution and martyrdom. They also encompass the concept of dying to oneself or practicing self-denial (Gal 2:20; 5:24; Rom 6:4–6) to allow the life of Jesus to be revealed in their mortal bodies (2 Cor 4:7–11). This concept aligns with the concept of biblical discipleship (Matt 16:24; Luke 14:27). For this reason, Davidson

[107] Gaffin, *In the Fullness of Time*, 408.

analyzes the telos of the Shepherd in these words: "The ultimate telos is the conformity of the people to the idea of God's rule and reign established in the lives of His people. While this telos is finally only realized in the new heavens (Rev 21:3), undershepherds aim to guide the flock toward greater actualization of it in their lives."[108]

Therefore, Christians who follow the Good Shepherd in the last days aim not only to reach the New Heaven and Earth, where they will live eternally with their Lord in glorious bodies, but also to become like him as they traverse the wilderness of life on earth. One possible interpretation of the ultimate purpose of God's shepherding can be viewed through two lenses: a spatiotemporal lens, in which the end goal is reaching the final destination when Christ returns, and a spiritual lens, in which the emphasis is on spiritual growth and attaining the likeness of Christ as they participate in his suffering and death through the "already and not yet" tension.[109]

In conclusion, the objective of the divine Shepherd is to fulfill all the needs of the sheep on his terms, which involves rescuing them from sin and transforming them into the likeness of Christ through the crucible of life. The accomplishment of God's shepherding telos was initially fulfilled through Christ's death and resurrection, which marked the commencement of a new era in which the Spirit of God operates in the lives of his flock, as prophesied in the Old Testament books of Joel, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. As the second part of his plan for salvation and sanctification, Christ—acting as the Shepherd of their souls—summons, regenerates, and justifies them, granting them a new life. He continues to sanctify and direct them through his Word and Spirit. For this eschatological ministry of the Shepherd, God employs human undershepherds to carry out his pastoral duties, which will be examined in the next section.

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[108] Davidson, "An Examination of the Shepherding Metaphor in Pastoral Theology," 61.

[109] Gaffin claims, "The ultimate goal of predestination for believers is 'to be conformed to the image of his [God's] Son' (Rom. 8:29). Until Jesus comes again, this is as much as anything is what it means to be conformed to that image, to have 'Christ . . . formed in you' (Gal 4:19): to be conformed to his death as the manifestation of his resurrection life." Gaffin, *In the Fullness of Time*, 408.

The Objective of Human Shepherds in the End Times

The objective of Christian pastoral ministry should align with the telos of the Shepherd for his flock. In this regard, the divine telos is the most influential force that shapes the work of undershepherds, as God determines not only the ends for which they strive but also how those ends are achieved.[110] Therefore, it is imperative that pastors and elders who serve as undershepherds should understand the pastoral function and purpose in light of God's telos for shepherding within the eschatological framework presented in the New Testament. In light of this, the subsequent section will explore the aspects of shepherding that have not yet been touched upon in this dissertation.[111]

First, in addition to serving the flock, pastors and elders who act as undershepherds are responsible for ultimately serving the Chief Shepherd. In this line of thinking, in a reminder of the OT leaders, Tidball notes, "As a leader Moses was not called to be original or creative, but simply a faithful messenger of God (Deut 5:23–27). It was his task to make known the covenant stipulations as God has revealed to him."[112] Likewise, David also led the nation of Israel as a human agent responsible to the true Shepherd of Israel (Ps 78:70–72). Thus, Laniak notes, "God is the ultimate Shepherd of his people. He calls human deputies to work for him, though at the risk that they presume prerogatives reserved for the Owner. To be a shepherd is to be both responsible for (the flock) and responsible to (the Owner)."[113]

To be accountable to the flock and the Owner, elders must faithfully model Christ's servant-leadership and refrain from ruling based on their desires and inclinations. Also, as servants of God and his flock, both aims and means are dictated to shepherds.

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[110] Davidson, "An Examination of the Shepherding Metaphor in Pastoral Theology," 61.

[111] While the previous section has addressed the shepherd's responsibilities in terms of leading, gathering, and nurturing, this section will explore broader theological concerns of eldership in line with eschatology explained in the previous section.

[112] Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds*, 38.

[113] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 248.

Undershepherds are restricted from employing any means they choose. The pattern of God's character and his shepherding of the flock constrains them. They must shepherd the flock, following the chief Shepherd in every way. In that sense, to the elders who are living in the last days, Peter gives the following instructions found in 1 Peter 5:1–4:

> So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the 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, 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. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Three major exhortations are given to the elders in this passage.[114] First, they are encouraged to tend and supervise God's flock, not out of obligation, but because it is by God's will. As Schreiner asserts, "The words 'God's flock' remind the elders that the congregation does not belong to them. It is God's church, and they are given the privilege and responsibility of shepherding it."[115] Indeed, the flock is God's church that is saved and gathered through the blood of Christ (1 Pet 2:25). For this reason, elders must serve the Chief Shepherd and his flock humbly and joyfully, remembering the grace and calling bestowed upon them through his suffering.[116] Secondly, they are expected to carry out their responsibilities eagerly and not for personal gain. In contrast to the self-seeking, predatory shepherds described in Ezekiel 34, Christian leaders are to serve the flocks of God sacrificially, imitating Christ's suffering. Finally, rather than using their position to dominate the church, they should serve as examples to the flock. That is to say, they should not abuse their authority, which is derived from Christ, but instead use their leadership position to model Christ's self-sacrificing life so that God's flock will imitate them.

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[114] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 230.

[115] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 233.

[116] Laniak notes, "As in Acts 20:28, the sacrifice of the Shepherd-Lamb is the source of motivation for this vigilance" for serving God's flock. Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 233.

Missionary theologian Lesslie Newbigin writes, “A true Christian pastor will be one who can dare to say to his people: ‘Follow me, as I am following Jesus.’” He says, “A true pastor must have such a relation with Jesus and with his people that he follows Jesus and they follow him.”[117] “Following Jesus” pertains to the New Testament’s discipleship, which involves more than just living a moral life. It entails a willingness to sacrifice one’s life for Christ and his people. So, a good shepherd-elder is the one who can honestly say, “Follow me as I lay my life down for you.” As early church history witnesses, Peter and many of his fellow elders did share in the fellowship of Christ’s suffering and lived as models of Christ for the flock to follow. They gave their lives through martyrdom and daily self-denial to identify themselves with Christ in death. However, their sacrifice was not in vain, as the chief Shepherd assured them the “unfading crown of glory” upon his return (1 Pet 5:4). This demonstrates that their sacrificial service to Christ and his people was motivated by their faith in Christ’s past grace (already) and their anticipation of his future reward (not yet).

Second, they are also called to raise a mature flock that resembles Christ. Paul defines the aim of his ministry in Colossians 1:28 as “that we may present everyone mature in Christ.” As Tidball explains, Paul “was not content to win converts. He desired to produce Christians who could stand on their own feet and would not remain spiritual babies, but progress to becoming mature spiritual adults” equipped to serve others as future spiritual leaders.[118] However, the aim of building up sheep to become Christlike servants appears somewhat passively in the Bible. Thus, Laniak, in discussing sacrificial pastoral leadership, claims that “the idea of shepherds as examples for their sheep

[117] J. E. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Good Shepherd: Meditations on Christian Ministry in Today’s World* (Oxford: Mowbray, 1977), 14.

[118] Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds*, 100.

stretches the metaphor. Members of the church are not only sheep but also emerging shepherds who will become like their leaders in serving others."[119]

Despite the metaphor's seeming passivity in the Bible, developing and training sheep to become spiritual leaders is an essential goal in God's telos of shepherding. Especially in the NT, God's desire to see all his people reach a level of maturity where they can serve and lead others is apparent. For this reason, the metaphor of building up the body of Christ is very frequent in Paul's writing (Rom 15:2; 1 Cor 14:12; Eph 2:22; 4:29; Col 2:7; 1 Thess 5:11). Also, it is indicated in Ephesians 4:11–13 that Christ gave pastors (shepherds) to the church so that they may build up the body of Christ to the "measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." This implies that the congregation should not be passive pastoral ministry recipients but should actively prepare for Christian service.[120]

Ephesians 4:11–16 highlights an insightful aspect of spiritual growth: it takes place through mutual ministry among Christians. Paul emphasizes the importance of the mutual and collective ministry of the church in edifying itself. At the same time, pastors and other spiritually gifted individuals such as evangelists and teachers are appointed by the church to equip the saints for ministry. Paul's writings contain numerous references to the mutual edification of the church (Rom 12:4–5; 1 Thess 5:11; Heb 10:24–25). Peter also emphasizes the significance of mutual service through the various spiritual gifts received by the believers from the Lord (1 Pet 4:10–11). In conclusion, pastors are not the only ones helping the faithful mature and become equipped for service. All Christians

[119] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 234.

[120] An important aspect of eschatological pastoral leadership is the theological concept of spiritual maturity. As discussed in a previous section, eschatological pastoral ministry can be viewed from two perspectives. Utilizing a spatiotemporal lens is one perspective. In this view, pastors and elders are tasked with gathering, nurturing, and leading God's congregation until they attain eternal habitation in the New World. One additional viewpoint is to view pastoral ministry through a spiritual lens. In this view, pastors are obligated to foster spiritual development in order for their congregations to become more Christ-like through identification with his suffering and death. Specifically, suffering for Christ is not limited to persecution and martyrdom. However, it refers to giving up one's life for Christ and his people. Thus, it is a sacred calling to utilize one's energy, gifts, and potential for the advancement of God's kingdom.

are required to serve one another and equip one another. Paul nonetheless considers it a special responsibility for the Christian leader to exert all of his strength, energy, and influence to involve all members in the mutual ministry as servant-leaders, or a mature flock that resembles Christ.[121]

Conclusion

This chapter focuses on critical passages demonstrating how Christ fulfills the role of the eschatological Shepherd promised by God. Through his sacrifice and resurrection, Christ gathers, nurtures, knows, leads, and protects his chosen flock through the end times to their eternal dwelling with him. As appointed leaders, pastors and elders are called to imitate Christ, the Model Shepherd, by sacrificing their lives through the power of the resurrection already at work. In doing so, they serve as a model of Christ's sacrificial life, helping their congregation to become more Christlike. Therefore, pastors play an essential role in discipling and maturing their sheep, who can become shepherds and mutually serve one another.

[121] Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds*, 101.

CHAPTER 3

USING THE SHEPHERDING METAPHOR TO ANALYZE THE BCM'S CLAIM THAT PASTORS SHOULD BIBLICALLY COUNSEL THEIR MEMBERS

Does the shepherding metaphor align with the BCM's assertion that pastors should counsel their congregation members biblically? The shepherding metaphor does not explicitly endorse the anthropological notion that humans are composed of spirit and body while excluding the third entity referred to as the "psyche" by integrationist counselors. Furthermore, the metaphor does not directly support the epistemological or ecclesiological claims made by the movement. This is because of the metaphor's inherent linguistic limitations. According to cognitive linguists and philosophers George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, metaphors facilitate understanding by relating one thing to another. They help us grasp abstract or transcendent concepts like "God" by comparing them to more familiar and concrete concepts such as Father, Warrior, or Shepherd.[1] Essentially, metaphors are primarily used to define complex ideas through analogies. Therefore, the shepherding metaphor's primary role is to define the nature of God and his relationship with his people, not directly answer questions of the present research.

However, it is important to emphasize that biblical metaphors carry theological implications beyond the immediate connection of meaning. Ian Paul observes that biblical metaphors are not randomly chosen or arbitrary; they are intentionally selected to convey theological concepts that a single definition cannot fully capture.[2]

[1] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 5–9.

[2] Ian Paul, "Metaphor," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin Vanhoozer (London: SPCK, 2005). More specifically, Paul explains that there are primarily two types of

Thus, the richness of meaning within a biblical metaphor is apprehended when interpreted within its historical and literary context. Particularly significant is understanding the metaphor from a redemptive-historical standpoint that revolves around Christ in the canon.[3] This perspective clarifies the meaning and provides theological answers related to the present subject matter.

Therefore, this chapter will evaluate the BCM's claim that pastors should biblically counsel their congregations using the shepherding metaphor defined in the redemptive history as presented in chapter 2. The first section will examine the claim from an anthropological perspective and the second from an epistemological one. The anthropological and epistemological sections will concentrate primarily on the pastor's suitability and ability to provide effective biblical counseling within the church. The emphasis of the third section, the ecclesiological perspective, will be on the authority of pastoral counseling and how it differs from lay counseling.

Using the Shepherding Metaphor to Analyze the BCM's Claim from an Anthropological Standpoint

As discussed in chapter 1, biblical counseling, rooted in Reformed theology, asserts a dichotomous anthropology (spirit and body) and denies any distinction between spirit and psyche asserted by some Christian counselors. Christian counselors, such as integrationist counselors, view cognitive, volitional, affective, and behavioral aspects as components of the holistic human spirit or heart, with sin and its effects on the heart being the source of human suffering. Therefore, biblical counselors contend that pastors,

metaphors in the Bible: vehicle and window. The difference between a metaphor being the vehicle of the truth and a window into it is that a metaphor as a vehicle of the truth is a way of expressing a truth that cannot be expressed literally, while a metaphor as a window into it is a way of seeing something new or different about the truth.

[3] Ian Paul claims, "For biblical metaphors . . . we must examine the meaning of words in their wider canonical context as well as their historical context. In understanding what it means for Jesus to be the 'good shepherd' (John), the biblical picture of leaders as shepherds in the OT will be as important as the historical reality of first-century shepherding." Paul, "Metaphor."

trained in the Bible and appointed by the church, are the soul care specialists responsible for providing biblical counseling to their members.

Canonical Interpretation of the Shepherding Metaphor Supports Dichotomy

Does the shepherding metaphor, the biblical-theological teachings concerning pastoral theology, support dichotomous anthropology? In essence, the shepherding metaphor aligns with the spirit-body anthropological framework. A biblical-theological analysis reveals that the metaphor is intricately connected to a dichotomous anthropological framework despite not explicitly endorsing a dichotomous perspective

For instance, Psalm 23:1 suggests that God attends to physical and spiritual needs, aligning with Jewish anthropology. As discussed in the second theological implication of the shepherding metaphor in chapter 2, "The Shepherd's relationship with his sheep," the metaphor assumes and implies that the sheep are satisfied through the Shepherd alone, as it is stated in Psalm 23:1: "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want." In line with David's confession of faith, the rest of the psalm portrays God's remarkable care and provision for his people—in body and spirit—and the satisfaction they enjoy through their relationship with him.

For instance, the Shepherd's role in caring for the physical needs of the sheep (leading them to green pastures, protecting them from physical harm) symbolizes God's concern for bodily wellbeing, reflecting the physical or bodily aspect of human nature. Meanwhile, the shepherd's role in guiding and directing the sheep (leading them in the right paths, providing comfort with his rod and staff) can be seen as representing God's influence on our inner life, decisions, and moral and spiritual well-being, symbolizing the spiritual aspect of human nature. Thus, the dual roles of the shepherd metaphorically

mirror the dualistic view of humans as composed of both body and spirit, each interacting with and being cared for by God in distinct yet interrelated ways.[4]

As previously discussed in earlier chapters, terms such as "spirit," "soul," and "heart" are used interchangeably to refer to the inner being in biblical texts. The concept of the "psyche" as a separate third entity is likely not part of biblical understanding, as the trichotomic interpretation of human nature, which includes body, soul, and spirit, characterizes Greek thought more than Jewish thought.[5] In modern theological anthropology, some scholars argue that the OT authors "present a picture of human beings that is necessarily holistic, even monistic (i.e., individual human beings are one kind of thing.)."[6] Nevertheless, the major scholarly view is the dichotomic view. H. D. McDonald supports this notion, stating that a trichotomic viewpoint is grounded more in Platonic theory than the Jewish worldview.[7] Thus, interpreting the metaphor within the canonical context helps us to understand that the shepherding metaphor carries dichotomous anthropology as a presupposition.

Pastors Should Biblically Counsel Since All Spiritual Needs Are Met in Christ, the Good Shepherd

The most significant part of Psalm 23 is its first line, "The Lord is my shepherd," because the shepherd who cares for the flock is none other than YHWH, who is self-sufficient, omnipotent, and eternal. The other astonishing aspect of this statement is the juxtaposition of the transcendent Being with the lowest profession of the time, the

[4] According to John Calvin, David's contentment and sense of fulfillment in this passage are beyond earthly satisfactions from riches and pleasure. But it is of the deep satisfaction of the spirit. For this reason, despite his power and wealth as a king, David humbly acknowledged his need for God's shepherding. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, trans. James Anderson (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 1:391.

[5] Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1938), 191.

[6] Joshua R. Farris, *An Introduction to Theological Anthropology: Humans, Both Creaturely and Divine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 23.

[7] Hugh Dermot McDonald, *The Christian View of Man*, Foundations for Faith (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1981), 75.

shepherd. David declares that YHWH has chosen to be the Shepherd of his people. In commenting on this verse, James M. Boice stated, "The great God of the universe has stooped to take just such care of you and me. This is an Old Testament statement, of course. But Christians can hardly forget that the metaphor was also taken up by Jesus and applied to himself, thus identifying himself with Jehovah, on the one hand, and assuming the task of being the shepherd of his people, on the other."[8]

As was discussed in chapter 2, the biblical theology of the shepherding metaphor ultimately reveals that Jesus Christ, the eschatological Shepherd, is the one who satisfies the deepest desires of the human heart. Throughout Scripture, the shepherding motif illustrates a story of God meeting his people's needs by knowing, leading, gathering, protecting, and caring for them despite their rebellious oppositions. God fulfills his shepherding telos by sending his Son, the Good Shepherd, to meet all their needs. Through Christ's death and resurrection, God gathers his people who believe in him and shepherds them by his Word and Spirit until they arrive at their final destination to live in eternal contentment (Rev 7:16–17).

In the Gospels, therefore, Christ identifies himself as the Good Shepherd and extends an invitation to those heavy-ladened, thirsty, and hungry to come to him (Matt 11:28; John 4:10; 6:35; 10:11). These metaphorical expressions symbolize spiritual longings, and the New Testament declares that Christ, the Good Shepherd, alone can fulfill every spiritual needs of God's flock (Matt 6:31–33; John 14:13–14; Phil 4:19). To put it differently, since God creates humans, they naturally depend on him for spiritual restoration. This is precisely what biblical counseling aims to achieve through Christ.

One constructive way to perceive our ontological reliance on God in the context of counseling issues is by understanding that psychotherapeutic concerns encompass moral dilemmas that can only be addressed by Christ. For instance, questions

[8] James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*, vol. 1, *Psalms 1–41*, An Expositional Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 208.

such as "Is it okay to feel angry? Should I consider divorce?" transcend mere psychological aspects; they inherently carry substantial moral implications. For instance, concerning the moral issues behind psychological problems, David Benner provides the following explanation:

> The reason It [Is it okay to feel angry?] is a moral question is that it is a question of how one should live one's life. Questions of whether or not to have an abortion or have an affair or leave one's spouse are moral questions, not because abortion, sex, and divorce are moral topics but because they concern matters of how life should be lived. In the same way, therefore, questions of how to handle one's emotions, how to understand an interpersonal conflict, or how to deal with a terminal illness are all moral questions not merely psychological ones, because they deal with how one ought to live one's life. [9]

From this perspective, one can argue that secular psychotherapy might help ease negative emotions that a person undergoing counseling might grapple with. Nevertheless, it falls short of adequately answering the ethical questions that accompany psychological distress. The all-encompassing remedy can only be delivered by Christ.

The theological declaration that Christ satisfies every spiritual need of all those who come and follow him does not imply that he is a spiritual panacea in that all human ills vanish immediately upon one's conversion. Instead, it conveys a spiritual fulfillment that results from a covenantal relationship established by Christ's death and resurrection and is experienced by the believer's trust in and obedience to their Shepherd. In that sense, the biblical-theological concept of wellness or satisfaction differs significantly from secular psychotherapeutic culture.

In this perspective, pastors who are called, gifted, and trained to teach the gospel are the most qualified individuals to help the congregation experience genuine hope, solace, and healing because they can help them come and follow the Good Shepherd. The role of pastors as biblical counselors is not focused on aiding those suffering to attain psychological and emotional relief or stability. Instead, their primary

[9] David G. Benner, *Care of Souls: Revisioning Christian Nurture and Counsel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 30.

objective is to guide individuals in knowing and faithfully following the Good Shepherd, who alone can lead them to the green pasture. Since all their deepest longings and needs are fulfilled in Christ, pastors are entrusted with the responsibility of helping the congregation listen to the Shepherd's words and apply them in their lives through the interpersonal ministry of the Word.

Pastors Should Biblically Counsel Because the Sheep Hear the Voice of the Good Shepherd

Joshua R. Farris claims that "God designs human beings as covenantal beings intended to for a relationship with him. God fashions humans in a particular way so that they can enter into relationships with others as covenantal representatives in the world."[10] Being made in God's image, humans are created with the purpose and communicative ability to engage in a relationship with him.[11] Despite the postmodern presupposition that conveying absolute meaning is impossible, the Bible claims that God has given humans the capacity to hear and understand adequate knowledge of his Word, enabling them to live in a relationship with him.[12] In other words, God's people can live in a relationship with the Good Shepherd, who fulfills their soul's needs and desires through his Word (Ps 23:1; John 10:14–15). Although their communicative ability may have been distorted by sin, as image-bearers of God and through the redemptive ministry of the triune God, it can be restored and even be enhanced by the Holy Spirit to hear and follow the Shepherd's Words to live in a covenantal relationship with him. Farris recognizes that

[10] Farris, *An Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 48.

[11] Although Reformed theology teaches total depravity and noetic effects of sin that hinder a sinner from comprehending and receiving God's revelation, it does not preclude a communicative ability of the "natural man" made in the image of God to know him. Cornelius Van Til claims that Bible "appeals to man as made in the image of God with full ability to see and understand the significance of his deeds." Cornelius Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge*, ed. K. Scott Oliphint, 2nd ed. (Glenside, PA: Westminster Seminary Press, 2023), 346.

[12] Refer to *Is There Meaning in the Text* by Kevin Vanhoozer for further discussion. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge*, Landmarks in Christian Scholarship (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009).

hearing God's call depends on the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit, which occurs in individuals who will be saved. In this sense, he is not claiming that everyone can hear and respond to God's call. Nonetheless, he contends that sin does not remove a person's communicative and relational capacity.[13]

The sheep's ability to hear and respond to the Shepherd is well explained in John 10:3–4: "To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice." The expression of the verse makes it abundantly clear that God's people can hear the voice of the Good Shepherd and follow his path to life. Therefore, the effectiveness of pastoral counseling is not ultimately dependent on the pastor's counseling training and experience but on the ontological spiritual status of the believers and the Good Shepherd who communicates to shepherd them through his Word.

Pastors Should Biblically Counsel Since the Goal of Biblical Counseling Is Sanctification

As David Davidson analyzed the telos of biblical shepherding, "The ultimate telos is the conformity of the people to the ideal of God's rule and reign established in the lives of His people. While this telos is finally only realized in the new heavens (Rev 21:3), undershepherds aim to guide the flock toward greater actualization of it in their lives."[14] Another way to understand this assertion is through the doctrine of sanctification, which is the goal of Christian life and thus biblical counseling (Rom 6:22; 2 Cor 7:1; Eph 5:2; 1 Thess 4:3–4; 5:23). Although many models of psychotherapies focus on alleviating emotional and psychological distress and mental disorder, biblical

[13] Farris, *An Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 49.

[14] David Allen Davidson, "An Examination of the Shepherding Metaphor in Pastoral Theology" (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022), 61.

counseling has a different goal. For instance,the American Psychological Association (APA) explains that psychotherapy is a versatile treatment addressing mental health conditions, alleviating symptoms, and identifying psychological root causes for improved functioning and enhanced emotional well-being.[15]

The aim of biblical counseling is the sanctification of the saints, which is to help counselees in their distresses in life to image Christ through the covenantal relationship with the triune God established through the redemptive work of Christ. Thus, Robert Jones cogently defines the goal of biblical counseling in these words:

> That our counselees become more and more like Jesus Christ, the perfect human (though divine) who thoroughly embodies every biblical ideal. Amid the hardships our believing counselees face in this fallen world, God is working all things—including those hardships—together to make them like Jesus (Rom 8:28–29). In turn, God calls us to labor and pray for this specific result in those we counsel (Gal 4:19; Eph 3:17).[16]

In this sense, biblical counseling seeks to apply the redemptive work of Christ revealed in the Bible to the lives of the saints so that, despite their sufferings and sin, they may experience sanctification with the help of the Holy Spirit.[17] Thus, Anthony Hoekema, a Reformed theologian, asserts that "sanctification is that work of God by which the Holy Spirit progressively delivers the believer from the pollution of sin and makes him or her more and more like Christ."[18]

The biblical theology of shepherding also presents a similar theological concept of sanctification. For his flock, to follow the Good Shepherd is to die to sin and

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[15] American Psychological Association, "What Is Psychotherapy?," accessed May 17, 2023, ht tps://www.psychiatry.org:443/patients-families/psychotherapy.

[16] Robert D. Jones, "What Is Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling?," in *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, Robert D. Jones, Kristin L. Kellen, and Rob Green (Nashville: B & H, 2021), 20.

[17] John Murray explains, "Sanctification is an aspect of the application of redemption. In the application of redemption, there is order, and the order is one of progression until it reaches its consummation in the liberty of the glory of the children of God (Rom. 8:21, 30)." John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 149.

[18] Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Carlisle, England: Paternoster Press, 1994), 107.

live in righteousness (1 Pet 2:24).[19] In other words, the objective of biblical counseling is not self-actualization or self-realization but to die to self and sin to live by Christ as a process of spiritual transformation. Therefore, to follow Christ is to suffer with him in mortifying sin and experiencing the power of his resurrection that sanctifies God's flock to become more like him, as explained in chapter 2. Through this process, sheep attain a deeper understanding of God and themselves, resulting in spiritual growth.[20]

If the objective of counseling, as asserted by secular psychologists, were solely to alleviate the emotional and psychological distress of those seeking counsel, pastors would not be regarded as the authorities in counseling. However, since biblical counseling aims to guide and disciple individuals to follow the Good Shepherd amidst their suffering and challenges, ultimately transforming them to resemble Christ and encounter the reign and authority of God in their lives, pastors possess not only the qualifications but also the responsibility to provide biblical guidance to their congregations. This is an aspect that secular psychotherapists are incapable of fulfilling. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer contemplated, delving into the depths of an individual's heart, where sin resides, is a task that only a Christian can undertake in order to offer assistance:

> The most experienced psychologist or observer of human nature knows infinitely less of the human heart than the simplest Christian who lives beneath the Cross of Jesus. The greatest psychological insight, ability and experience cannot grasp this one thing: what sin is. Worldly wisdom knows what distress and weakness and failure are, but it does not know the godlessness of man. And so it does not know

[19] It is important to note that biblical counselors perceive sin to be the primary cause of psychological and emotional issues in humans. J. I. Packer and Carolyn Nystrom explain the effects of sins in the sheep's lives in these words: "We fallen humans excel at self-deception when it comes to decision making. We shut our eyes to inconvenient facts, we naively rely on our own imperfectly trained consciences, we make exceptions to rules to favor ourselves, we listen only to people who say what we want to hear, we decide on policies and courses of action in unawareness of our own deep-down motives." J. I. Packer and Carolyn Nystrom, *Guard Us, Guide Us: Divine Leading in Life's Decisions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008), 137.

[20] Farris writes, "Similar to the way we see God knowing us in the OT and Christ knowing us in the NT, we see stepping-up process from both Testaments regarding our capacity to imagine God in Christ as we *image* Christ." Farris, *An Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 49.

that man is destroyed only by his sin and can be healed only by forgiveness. Only the Christian knows this.[21]

Using the Shepherding Metaphor to Analyze the BCM's Claim from an Epistemological Standpoint

Jay Adams claims, "From the beginning, human change depended upon counseling."[22] Referring to the creation account in Genesis, he states that as created and finite beings, humans require the Creator's knowledge to live as God intends and experience holistic growth, including all aspects of the human heart. Adams explains that humans were created in the image of God. Their existence is rooted in and dependent on the Creator. They need to recognize the Creator and gain knowledge from his revelation. That is to say, the significance and purpose of their lives and their very existence stem from and depend on God's revelation. They cannot find these understandings within themselves as created beings that are not self-governing or independent entities.

This particular epistemological foundation of Adams reflects his Reformed commitment, influenced notably by Cornelius Van Til. Powlison claims that Adams held on to "particular theological positions within generic Calvinism."[23] However, he most significantly believed that "epistemology and apologetics must be presuppositional, in the way of Calvinistic philosopher Cornelius Van Til, not positivistic and evidential."[24] While not all biblical counselors align with Adams's Reformed Presbyterian doctrines, they share his epistemological presuppositions, acknowledging that humans require God's special revelation to know the truth and rightly interpret their lives, as mentioned in chapter 1.

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[21] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together and Prayerbook of the Bible*, ed. Gerhard Ludwig Müller, Albrecht Schönherr, and Geffrey B. Kelly, trans. Daniel W. Bloesch and James H. Burtness, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 5 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 115.

[22] Jay E. Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling: More Than Redemption* (Grand Rapids: Ministry Resource Library, 1986), 1.

[23] David Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement: History and Context* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2010), 12.

[24] Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement*, 12.

In that sense, the BCM's claim that the pastors must counsel their congregation members is based on their epistemological conviction. Biblical counselors believe humans are epistemologically dependent upon God's special revelation to understand their experiences in his created world. In that sense, biblical counseling is a personal ministry of the Word that conveys God's living truth, empowered by the Holy Spirit to help interpret an individual's experience and find biblical solutions in light of the divine normative, Scripture. This powerful ministry of the Word corrects the counselee's perception of their situation and experience so that they can respond in ways that are pleasing to God. Therefore, instead of relying on secular psychotherapy, the BCM trusts the Bible, believing that Scripture is the authoritative and sufficient Word of God as the epistemological normative for interpreting and understanding human experience to live under God's reign. In this scheme of things, pastors play a vital role in counseling God's people through the Word because they are the experts in biblical knowledge.

Pastors Should Biblically Counsel Their Congregation Because the Sheep's Well-Being Depends on Hearing God's Word

Does the biblical theology of shepherding metaphor support biblical counselors' Reformed epistemological conviction that human beings must rely on God's special revelation, the Bible, for knowledge concerning the self, world, God, and redemption to experience growth and healing? Although the question is not directly answered in an encyclopedic format in the Bible, the biblical shepherding metaphor demonstrates that God's flock relies on the Shepherd's divine guidance and care for their well-being. Given their vulnerability and tendency to stray, the sheep depend entirely on the Shepherd's care and leadership for guidance and survival.[25] Without the Shepherd's care and guidance, they are lost and scattered in confusion. Thus, the Bible explicates the Shepherd's provision for direction, care, and nourishment for the sheep's well-being and

[25] W. Phillip Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, (Minneapolis: World Wide, 1970), 14.

guidance through God's Word (e.g., Ps 23; Ezek 34; Luke 15:4–7; John 10:11–18). From this perspective, I argue that the shepherding metaphor upholds the epistemological presupposition of the BCM that pastors are suited for the biblical counseling ministry. The following explanations support this assertion through the imagery of "feeding" or "nurturing" in relation to the shepherding metaphor.

In the Old Testament, the primary responsibility of shepherds was to feed the flock. Through his research on the background of Ezekiel 34, Deron Biles explains that feeding the flock is the foremost duty of a shepherd in the Bible. Thus, he asserts that when the Lord revealed his extensive message on the duties of a shepherd, the focus was initially placed on the provision of nourishment for his sheep (Ezek 34:2–3, 8, 10, 19).[26] God demonstrated this shepherding provision primarily through Israel's sojourning in Sinai. For example, God's provision of manna and water in the desert clearly displays his nurturing care for his flock as the Shepherd of Israel (Exod 16–17; Num 20).

However, the most prominent and frequent expression of God's provision was spiritual nourishment through his Word in the OT. Without his Word, the flock would be lost and devoid of spiritual life. Thus, God provided spiritual nourishment and guidance for his people through the ministry of his Word delivered by his human shepherds such as priests, prophets, kings, and elders, as we saw in chapter 2. Throughout the Bible, God emphasizes the crucial role of teaching and prophesying his Word to the flock as the most significant ministry of his undershepherds. For this reason, it was important for the human shepherds to speak and lead as the Lord had commanded them (Deut 17:18–20; 18:18; 1 Kgs 3:14; Ezek 3:4–7; Isa 59:31). Even Christ, the Good Shepherd, spoke the Father's Words and not his own (John 12:49). As the Messiah, it was his duty to teach the Father's message and ensure that the flock was fed through the Word. Consequently, in the New Testament, the concept of pastoral shepherding primarily aligns with the

[26] Deron J. Biles, ed., "Introduction: The Ministry of a Shepherd," in *Pastoral Ministry: The Ministry of a Shepherd*, Treasury of Baptist Theology (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2017), 15.

ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4; 20:20; Eph 4:11–12; Col 1:28; 2 Tim 4:2; Titus 1:9). This involves faithfully proclaiming the gospel of Christ, who embodies and is the fulfillment of the Word of God (John 1:1–5; Heb 1:1).

In that sense, Jesus instructs Peter, appointed to shepherd the flock after Christ's ascension, to tend his sheep and "feed" his lambs in John 21. The feeding imagery in this context primarily pertains to the teaching of God's Word, as it is a vital component of the spiritual sustenance of God's people. Jesus, citing Deuteronomy 8:3, said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matt 4:4). In other words, "Jesus indicates that our spiritual life is maintained by daily nourishment with the Word of God, just as our physical lives are maintained by daily nourishment with physical food."[27] Consequently, the Chief Shepherd issues a directive to Peter, the newly appointed leader of the church (John 21) and also utilizes him to guide the other elders of the church in the task of shepherding his flock through the ministry of the Word (1 Pet 5:1–4).[28]

The imagery of feeding in the shepherding metaphor and its relevance to epistemology and biblical counseling can be further elucidated through an ontological explanation. For instance, by considering the ontological difference between domesticated sheep and their human shepherd, we can draw a parallel to the ontological distinction between finite human beings and the transcendent God. This ontological gap highlights the need for humans to rely on God for true knowledge. Just as a sheep requires its shepherd's knowledge and guidance to comprehend its situation and place in the world, humans similarly require God's guidance to attain genuine knowledge about themselves, the world, and God. As explained above, the relationship between the

[27] Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 118.

[28] As Schreiner indicated in his commentary for 1 Peter 5:1–4, Peter probably had Jesus's command to him from John 21 in mind as he was exhorting his fellow elders to shepherd and oversee God's flock. Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, NAC 37 (Nashville: B & H, 2003), 233.

Shepherd and the sheep vividly demonstrates the ontological and epistemological dependence (Ps 23; 95:7; Ezek 34:12; John 10:27).[29]

According to Eduard Thurneysen, "God creates man not only by the Word; he creates him also for the Word. When God addresses him, man recognizes himself as created to hear God and acknowledge Him as God. He lives in the call and summons of God, being addressed and speaking to Him."[30] Thurneysen suggests that humans rely on God's revelation as finite beings to attain true knowledge of themselves, God, and the world. This dependency can be likened to a sheep relying on a shepherd for guidance and nourishment. Similarly, Van Til, who influenced Jay Adams, posited that human knowledge is "analogous" to God's. This means that human knowledge is (1) created, thus distinct from God's knowledge, and (2) subject to God's sovereignty and authority:

> The system [of knowledge] that Christians seek to obtain may . . . be said to be analogical. By this is meant that God is the original and that man is the derivative. God has absolute self-contained system within himself. . . . But man, as God's creature, cannot have a replica of that system of God. He cannot have a reproduction of that system. He must, to be sure, think God's thoughts after him; but this means that he must, in seeking to form his own system, constantly be subject to the authority of God's system to the extent that this is revealed to him.[31]

From this perspective, the primary role of a Christian counselor is to guide individuals in aligning their thoughts and perspectives with the knowledge of God so that

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[29] What makes the transcendent God communicate with his creation is his gracious covenant with his people. As Carl Trueman has noted in his study of John Owen, the doctrine of the covenant "allows for the bridging of the ontological chasm that exists between an infinite, self-existent Creator and a finite, dependent creation." Carl R. Trueman, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man*, Great Theologians Series (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007), 67.

[30] Eduard Thurneysen, *A Theology of Pastoral Care* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1962), 59. While Thurneysen, a theologian associated with the neo-orthodox movement, did not directly influence the BCM, his theological perspective as a pastoral theologian regarding the significance of God's special revelation for human growth aligns with a similar emphasis.

[31] Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge*, 48. According to John Frame, Van Til's understanding of analogical knowledge diverges from Aquinas's usage of the term. While Aquinas employs the concept to describe a metaphorical understanding of God that rejects a literal interpretation, Van Til employs it to elucidate that human knowledge bears an image-like relationship to God's knowledge, stemming from the inherent ontological distinction between humanity and God. John M. Frame, *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1995), 93.

they may experience restoration found in the person of Christ.[32] They accomplish this by first helping counselees understand themselves and their circumstances in light of God's Word to find their hope and restoration in Christ. Likewise, Robert Jones claims that "biblical counselors focus on the Bible's central theme: the Lord Jesus Christ and his life-changing, redeeming work for humanity. In that sense, biblical counseling is Christ-centered."[33] Therefore, pastors who have received training in the gospel of Jesus Christ are most ideally suited for the counseling ministry.

The pastors possess the necessary knowledge and expertise to effectively apply biblical principles in counseling others. Thus, the New Testament teaches that pastors and elders have been called and equipped by God specifically for this purpose—to nurture and guide God's flock through the Word (Eph 4:11; Col 1:28; 1 Tim 3:2; 2 Tim 2:2; Titus 1:9). Most significantly, pastors must have the ability to preach and teach about Christ to feed the flock because Christ is the bread and living water from heaven, as revealed in John 6:25–35. In this sense, the primary task of shepherds is to feed and guide God's people by directing them toward Christ through public and private teaching of God's Word.

Pastors Should Biblically Counsel Their Congregations as Scripture Sufficiently Provides the Interpretive Lens to Understand All Human Issues

When considering the relationship between epistemology and biblical counseling, a fundamental question arises regarding the sufficiency of Scripture. Specifically, regarding this project, we need to determine whether pastors are competent

[32] In this line of thinking, Kevin Vanhoozer claims that the primary role of a pastor as a disciple-maker or "public theologian" is to shape and mold the perspective (or imagination) of his congregation through theology. He states, "Making disciples involves more (but not less) than informing minds or forming habits. It also involves transforming imagination, that is, the primary ways they see, think, about, and experience life." Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Hearers and Doers: A Pastor's Guide to Making Disciples through Scripture and Doctrine* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), xxv.

[33] Robert D. Jones, "Who Can and Should Do Biblical Counseling?," in Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 12.

to counsel their congregation using the Bible as the authoritative and sufficient source of counseling knowledge. If so, should pastors exclusively rely on the Bible for pastoral counseling, or should they seek guidance from secular psychology and psychotherapy to serve their congregations better during conflict and distress? Finally, could the metaphor of shepherding offer any insights into this question?

The direct connection between biblical counseling and the sufficiency of Scripture is absent in the shepherding metaphor. However, one can infer a reasonable response by contemplating the intended goal or telos of biblical shepherding and its consequences for Christian epistemology. As discussed in chapter 2, the telos of biblical shepherding must be defined exclusively on God's terms, which involves rescuing the sheep from sin and transforming them into the likeness of Christ as they follow him through the crucible of life, participating in his suffering. The Bible explains this divine shepherding telos in double eschatological realities: (1) God has *already* accomplished the shepherding telos through Christ's death and resurrection, which marked the commencement of a new era in which the Spirit of God operates in the lives of his flock, and (2) Christ, acting as the flock's Chief Shepherd, calls, regenerates, justifies, and sanctifies them through his Word and Spirit *until* they reach the final glorification into his likeness in the heavenly realm.

The aim of biblical pastoral counseling differs significantly from that of secular psychotherapy, which dismisses God's redemptive work accomplished through Christ in history. Psychotherapy, which falls within the broader field of secular psychology, aims "to assess, diagnose, and treat dysfunctional emotional reactions, ways of thinking, and behavior patterns."[34] In other words, it focuses primarily on diagnosing and fixing what is considered to be mental dysfunction to help the patients find emotional

[34] American Psychological Association, *APA Dictionary of Psychology* (online), accessed August 18, 2023, s.v., "Psychotherapy."

and psychological relief. This secular model primarily functions under a medical metaphor, which views human suffering as a medical problem.

In contrast, biblical pastoral counseling interprets internal human struggles predominantly through the lens of a shepherding metaphor. As a result, pastoral counseling aims to guide individuals toward spiritual transformation and a likeness to Christ as they navigate life's challenges. This is achieved by fostering unwavering trust in what Christ has already achieved and will continue to accomplish in their journey to the Promised Land. In essence, biblical counseling strives for inner transformation, spiritual formation, and discipleship in the context of redemptive history. In this line of thinking, biblical counseling can also be understood as discipleship. In the same line, Jeffery Forrey defines the purpose of biblical counseling as discipleship, which is "to help people grow in relationship with Jesus, learning what it means to obey Him, imitate Him, and glorify Him. Biblical counselors do that in the wake of trials or temptations that overwhelm people. My [or a biblical counselor's] goal ultimately is not happiness for my counselee, but rather, holiness."[35]

Considering this goal of pastoral care and pastoral biblical counseling, one can argue that Scripture is sufficient for pastoral counseling because the Bible provides Christians with all that is necessary to live and grow in the likeness of Christ. This is in line with 2 Peter 1:3–4, "His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires" (NIV). Also, in line with the passage, *Westminster Confession of Faith* 1.6 states, "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, *man's salvation, faith, and life*, is either expressly set down in scripture, or by good

[35] Jeff Forrey, "What Is Psychology?," in *Scripture and Counseling: God's Word for Life in a Broken World*, ed. Robert W. Kellemen and Jeff Forrey, BCCB (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 83.

and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men."[36]

According to the *Confession*, the Bible contains the whole counsel of God that is necessary for man's salvation, faith, and life. The Bible teaches everything necessary for a fulfilling and God-pleasing life, centered on godliness in Christ. Paul's "testimony in 2 Timothy 3:15–17 indicates that there is no such deficiency since the Scriptures can furnish the believer unto perfection."[37] In other words, the Bible provides sufficient knowledge to grow into holiness or the likeness of Christ.

Summarizing the church's historical understanding of the sufficiency of Scripture into two aspects, Heath Lambert claims, "These [historical] statements speak to the sufficiency of Scripture for *doctrine*, but they also address the sufficiency of Scripture for *living the Christian life*."[38] Clarifying the definition, Jeremy Pierre explains the sufficiency of Scripture in counseling in three conceptual categories. First, he explains that Scripture is sufficient to do something in our hearts. Second, the Bible is sufficient to teach necessary wisdom and guidance to Christians. Third, and most notably pertaining to the present topic, the Bible is sufficient to help us see the world through it.[39] Specifically, the Bible provides a sufficient lens to perceive and understand human experience.

By upholding the validity of Pierre's third category, one could contend that the central question is not whether the Bible's sufficiency for counseling is in doubt. Instead, it is about identifying *What standard, beyond the Bible, could more comprehensively address human experience and fulfill God's shepherding mission of*

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[36] *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1881), chap. 1, "Of the Holy Scripture."

[37] G. I. Williamson. *Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R , 2004), chap. 1, "Of the Holy Scriptures," sec. 1, 6. Kindle.

[38] Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 41.

[39] Jeremy Pierre, "Scripture Is Sufficient, But to Do What?," in Kellemen and Forrey, *Scripture and Counseling*, 94–108.

nurturing growth among his flock. From this perspective, the shepherding analogy unequivocally reinforces the BCM's argument, affirming that pastors possess the skill and responsibility to offer biblical counseling to Christians, enabling them to traverse the path of biblical healing and growth.

Using the Shepherding Metaphor to Analyze the BCM's Claim from an Ecclesiological Standpoint

As explained in chapter 2, the biblical theology of the shepherding metaphor primarily focuses on the relationship between God and his flock. The Scriptures show God's unwavering love and care for his flock as their Shepherd, from the beginning of redemptive history in Genesis to its culmination in Revelation. The Good Shepherd continues to provide soul care for his flock through the church's ministries, including discipleship, evangelism, counseling, prayer, and small group meetings. It is essential to underscore that the execution of these caregiving methods occurs under the oversight of pastors and elders whom Christ has appointed as his undershepherds within the church.

Pastors and elders are not the exclusive bearers of soul-care ministry responsibility (Eph 4:11–12), given the command of mutual Word ministry among church members. However, the Chief Shepherd officially charges pastors with the sacred duty of shepherding God's flock with competence and steadfast devotion to him and his flock (John 21:15–17; 1 Pet 5:1–3). This encompassing duty includes various pastoral functions such as public preaching, administration of sacraments, leading in prayer, and overseeing the spiritual welfare of the congregation. Nevertheless, within the comprehensive role of shepherding in the church, biblical counseling is a pivotal facet that cannot be neglected, in line with the assertions of the BCM. Within that context, this segment will scrutinize the BCM's assertion from an ecclesiological standpoint, drawing from the insights provided by the biblical theology of the shepherding metaphor. The section will primarily focus on the order of ministry and the authority of pastoral counseling.

Pastors Should Biblically Counsel Because Christ Is the Chief Shepherd of His Church

The BCM's assertion that pastors should provide biblical counseling to their congregations is rooted in their theological conviction that Christ is the head of the church and his intended purpose.[40] A majority of biblical counselors believe that since Christ is the head of the church, he alone determines the goal of Christian ministry.[41] What, then, is the aim of Christian ministry directed by Christ?

Christ established the church's purpose to minister to the people of God through witnessing and teaching the gospel, leading to their conversion and spiritual growth for the glory of God.[42] Ignoring Christ's purpose for the church would be a denial of his lordship. In this line of thinking, Jones highlights in his observation of the NT that the local church, formed by the gospel (1 Tim 1:1–20; 3:16) and properly ordered (1 Tim 2:1–3:13), serves as the foundation for the ministry of the gospel (1 Tim 3:14–15).[43] Thus, one can also argue that the church exists to baptize and disciple God's chosen people as the foundation for the ministry of the gospel (Matt 28:16–20; 1 Cor 12:12–14; Eph 4:11–13; 1 Pet 2:9–10). In that sense, the aim of pastoral ministry within the church must be understood under the headship of Christ and his purpose for the church. Within this context of this thinking, and concerning pastoral counseling, Adams concludes, "Fundamentally, then, pastoral counseling is helping Christians to become sanctified. Counseling involves helping people to put off old patterns which grew out of rebellion toward God and helping them to put on new practices which grow out of obedience to

[40] T. Dale Johnson, *The Church as a Culture of Care: Finding Hope in Biblical Community* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2021), 76–94.

[41] In the same line of thinking, Adams claims that "Jesus Christ is at the center of all true Christian counseling." Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel: Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling*, Jay Adams Library (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 41.

[42] Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 4, *Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 377.

[43] Jones, "Who Can and Should Do Biblical Counseling?," 28.

God. This is the shepherd's challenge, opportunity and duty."[44] While various opinions exist regarding the church's nature and role in serving people, Christ, the head of the church, ultimately determines its identity and mission. Herman Bavinck, in the same line, asserted, "The purpose of the church as an institution consists in gathering the elect, in building up the body of Christ, in perfecting the saints, and thus in glorifying God (Eph. 4:11)."[45] From that standpoint, the BCM's conviction that pastors should biblically counsel their congregation aligns harmoniously with the biblical theology of shepherding metaphor, which recognizes the headship of Christ over his flock, the church.

In Scripture, the imagery of Christ as the Chief Shepherd of his church (1 Pet 5:4) exemplifies his lordship over the flock. Martin Bucer supports this notion by referencing Ezekiel 34:11–14, affirming that Christ is the sole Shepherd of God's elect, caring for and saving them from destruction.[46] He emphasizes, "Christ the Lord feeds his sheep, saves them from destruction, and gathers them into his land and feeds them on all the mountains, in all the meadows and pasture of Israel, that is all the congregations of Christians."[47] The shepherding metaphor highlights that Christ, the Good Shepherd, saves and cares for his people to grow in his Spirit and Word as their Chief Shepherd.

Nonetheless, the Chief Shepherd organizes his church so that he works through his human undershepherds, as we have observed various times in chapter 2. The Chief Shepherd calls his undershepherds (pastors and elders) to nurture and care for his flock through the gospel-centered Word ministries to accomplish his purpose for his

[44] Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 77.

[45] Clowney argues that if the church takes precedence over Christ in our devotion, spiritual decay sets in, emphasizing that Jesus himself declared, "I will build my church." Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church*, CCT (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 15.

[46] Martin Bucer, *Concerning the True Care of Souls*, trans. Peter Beale (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2009), 11.

[47] Bucer, *Concerning the True Care of Souls*, 11.

sheep, not their personal ambitions. In that sense, pastoral counseling is an obedient submission to the call of the Chief Shepherd.[48] For this reason, Johnson claims,

> In order to reclaim the role of the elder in soul care, it is critical to understand the church's structure with Jesus as our Head and Shepherd. The elders operate as under-shepherds, whom God has uniquely gifted, called, and equipped under the church's authority and structure to care for souls. The care of the broken is intrinsically built within God's church design, clearly demonstrated by the tasks he gives to the shepherds who lead his people.[49]

The Biblical Pastoral Ministry of Teaching Requires Pastors to Know and Guide the Sheep at a Personal Level through Biblical Counseling

As presented in chapter 1, the BCM asserts that the pastor's teaching ministry encompasses both public and private aspects, involving preaching and counseling in the Word. In addition to teaching the gospel truth to the entire congregation on the Lord's Day, pastors should also engage in private teaching of the gospel in the form of counseling with individual members on weekdays. This personalized ministry approach helps each member grow in the Word, particularly during struggles against sin and hardships in life. As with the public ministry of the Word, through counseling, pastors seek the lost sheep (Matt 18:10–14), care for their needs (Ps 23; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2–4) and protect them from heretical teachings (Acts 20:29–30). For this reason, Lambert claims, "Counseling is a ministry of the Word in every way that preaching is a ministry of the Word. Pastors must not think of their labor in the Word as being exclusively bound in preaching."[50]

Does a biblical theology of shepherding support the BCM's claim that pastors should biblically counsel, given that counseling constitutes the private ministry of the

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[48] In this line of thinking, Lambert claims, "Pastors err when they fail to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and Paul, who gave themselves to the teaching of counseling and preaching." Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 307.

[49] Johnson, *The Church as a Culture of Care*, 117.

[50] Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 306.

Word? As previously discussed, the term "shepherd" is employed in verb forms to indicate the shepherding ministry of elders in various verses (John 21:15–17; Acts 20:28; Heb 13:17; 1 Pet 5:1–4). Nonetheless, its noun form, denoting the pastoral office, appears only once in Ephesians 4:11. This single occurrence in Ephesians 4:11 holds particular importance in comprehending the role of a pastor in the church. The word is coupled with the term "teacher" in the same verse, underscoring the significance of the teaching ministry carried out by pastors. Regarding this, Malcolm Yarnell proposes that in coupling the metaphor of shepherding with the role of teaching, Paul may have been reflecting upon God's promise from Jeremiah 3:15: "And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding."[51] F. F. Bruce also notes, "Teaching is an essential part of the pastoral ministry; it is appropriate, therefore, that the two terms, 'pastors and teachers,' should be joined together to denote one order of ministry."[52]

It is difficult to believe that the pastor and elders who are charged to teach God's Word to the flock are only responsible for public preaching that is done at a distance from individual sheep. Shepherds cannot properly care for their flock unless they live among and near the sheep, as illustrated by the biblical shepherding metaphor. For this reason, Deepak Reju asserts that "the shepherd smells like his sheep because his life is intimately tied with theirs. The shepherd knows each sheep so personally, he is able to call them out by name (John 10:3)."[53] As Reju explains, shepherds in the Bible were accountable for knowing each sheep by name and tending to its needs (e.g., Ps 23; John 10:3–4). In this line of thinking, Isaiah 40:11 even depicts a shepherd gathering sheep in

[51] Malcolm Yarnell, "The Shepherd Who Protects the Sheep," in Biles, *Pastoral Ministry*, 114.

[52] F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1984), 348.

[53] Deepak Reju, "Dear Pastor: Shepherd God's Flock," in *Biblical Counseling and the Church: God's Care through God's People*, ed. Bob Kellemen and Kevin Carson, BCCB (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 49.

his arms and carrying it on his bosom, portraying an intimate bond between the sheep and its caretaker. The apostle Paul also explains that he taught from house to house, not just in large gatherings as a shepherd (Acts 20:20).

The personal and intimate teaching through conversational ministry is evident in Jesus's ministry. Powlison, in surveying five chapters in the Gospel of Mark, asserts that Jesus spent more time ministering to individuals than crowds.[54] As the Good Shepherd, he drew near to the flock, providing comfort and guidance to their troubled and suffering hearts through the teachings of God's Word. Powlison claims,

> He [Jesus] often spoke to crowds outdoors and to congregations in synagogues. He gave sermons. But he also did a lot of talking with people—intentional, honest conversation. He counseled the Word. He conversed the gospel. Jesus dealt with the immediate questions and struggles that individuals put to him. He asked questions of them in turn. He talked the same kinds of issues that he preached.[55]

Through this observation, Powlison is not asserting that pastoral ministry should involve counseling more than preaching. He clarifies that the observations do not set a norm for pastoral ministry. Nevertheless, the biblical shepherding metaphor and the example of Jesus's ministry indicate that pastoral work should encompass counseling, which constitutes the private ministry of the Word.[56]

This is also in line with the teaching aspect of the Great Commission given to the apostles. According to Jones, "Jesus directed his apostles to win people to him, baptize them, and teach 'them to observe everything' he had commanded." He continues,

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[54] David Powlison, *Speaking Truth in Love: Counsel in Community* (Winston-Salem, NC: Punch Press, 2005), 97. See also Jones, "Who Can and Should Do Biblical Counseling?," 25; Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 306.

[55] Powlison, *Speaking Truth in Love*, 97.

[56] The New Testament clearly demonstrates the intimate and personal ministry of the undershepherds. For instance, in the case of Cornelius, although he had inward faith and received a vision from the Lord, Christ ensured that he was appropriately taught and spiritually reborn through the personal ministry of the apostle Peter (Acts 10). Similarly, when Christ converted Paul on the road to Damascus, he directed him to be further instructed and strengthened through the personal ministry of Ananias before receiving baptism (Acts 9). As observed through these NT narratives, the Lord intends to maintain this ministerial order, wherein he works in our lives through his undershepherds.

"Doing so requires giving biblical counsel."[57] Jones argues that the Great Commission demands pastors not only to teach the contents of the gospel but also how it applies to individuals' life situations. According to this argument, the fact that Jesus engaged in more conversational teaching than public preaching is not surprising. It demonstrates that he strongly desired to care for his sheep personally. For this reason, biblical counseling is a vital component of the teaching ministry of pastors. Following the Good Shepherd, they should strive to make disciples by providing personalized teaching and counseling for the lost and suffering sheep.[58]

Another perspective for comprehending the essential nature of biblical pastoral counseling using the shepherding metaphor is to consider it in terms of the concept of healing facilitated by God's Word. Dale Johnson asserts that pastors are responsible for caring for the souls under their care through biblical counseling, arguing that brokenness is not limited to the physical in the Bible but also includes the internal vexation of the soul. Johnson bases his argument on Ezekiel 34:4: "The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up."[59] Johnson asserts the theological necessity of biblical pastoral counseling while criticizing the superficial and unbiblical modern pastoral counseling that relies on secular psychology. He believes that the brokenness of humanity goes much deeper than issues found in the family of origin or the individual's unconscious mind. He asserts that "original and personal sin is the culprit of man's brokenness" and that only Christ can

[57] Jones, "Who Can and Should Do Biblical Counseling?," 26.

[58] For further understanding on this topic, see Robert Jones, "Does the Great Commission Require Biblical Counseling?," *Biblical Counseling Coalition* (blog), July 17, 2019, https://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/2019/07/17/does-the-great-commission-require-biblical-counseling/.

[59] Dale Johnson, "Shepherds Must Bind Up the Broken," in Biles, *Pastoral Ministry*, 81–83.

heal.[60] Therefore, it is the pastors, not the secular psychotherapists, who have the primary responsibility to counsel the broken under their pastoral care.

The Order of Ministry for Soul Care

The NT teaches that all Christians are to participate in the ministry of Christ to his church as the royal priesthood and the body of Christ (Rom 12:4–6; 1 Cor 12:14–20; Eph 4:11–12; Gal 6:2). In this line of thinking, Bucer, basing his thoughts concerning the care of soul on Ezekiel 34:16, argued that the duty of all Christians to each other was "to draw to Christ those who are alienated; to lead back those who have been drawn away; to secure the amendment of life in those who fall into sin; to strengthen weak and sickly Christians; to preserve Christians who are whole and strong, and urge them forward in all good."[61] This particular perspective concerning the mutual care ministry of the entire congregation is evident in the NT (e.g., 1 Thess 5:11; Heb 3:13; Jas 5:16; 1 Pet 4:8–10). In this line of thinking, "ministry in the New Testament is as much the activity of church members as it is the activity of the church's official pastors and deacons."[62]

However, it pleased the Chief Shepherd to organize Christian ministry so that he works through appointed human shepherds first. In his wise and sovereign plan, he appointed elders and pastors to be at the forefront of the soul care ministry as his undershepherds initiating, modeling, and guiding the entire shepherding ministry within the local church.

The pattern of Christ selecting his ministers is apparent in the NT (1 Cor 3:5–7; 4:1). As God chose human undershepherds such as Moses and David in the OT to lead and care for Israel, Christ also selected the twelve disciples to continue his ministry of care for his church (Matt 10:1, 5–8; Mark 3:13–15; John 21:15–17). For instance,

[60] Johnson, "Shepherds Must Bind Up the Broken," 90.

[61] John T. McNeill, *A History of the Cure of Souls* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1951), 178.

[62] Robert David Jones, "A Biblical-Theological Study of the New Testament Churches as God's" (DTheol diss., University of South Africa, 2005), 38.

Matthew records that Jesus called twelve disciples "and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and affliction." He commanded them to go "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt 10:1, 5–8). The passage contains clear references to shepherding imagery, which alludes to Jeremiah 50:6.[63] John Nolland, commenting on Matthew 10:6, asserts that "in continuity with interest here in the lost sheep will be the concern in the life of the church for those who go astray (under the imagery of sheep) and are in danger of being lost in 18:12–14."[64] The idea is that Christ, as the Chief Shepherd, designated his twelve disciples to continue the shepherding ministry on his behalf, and his church will perpetuate this by appointing its own elders after them in his physical absence.

It is critical to note through various NT passages that Christ established an order of ministry by appointing his apostles for the early church (Matt 10:1, 5–8; 16:13–20; 28:18–20; Mark 3:13–15; John 21:15–17). For instance, as James Bannerman explains through the Great Commission, "The appointment of the Apostles by our Lord, with the commission given to them to 'go and make disciples of all nations,' is itself an evidence of His intention to employ . . . , not merely the mission of the Holy Spirit, but the mission of men holding an office an employing it for that use."[65] Following Christ, the apostles made provision for the church by appointing sufficient pastors and teachers trained in their teachings to succeed them after their removal. For example, Paul gave the command to 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). To Titus, he also said, "This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained

[63] In this verse, the lost sheep imagery is used to describe the Jewish people, who have been led astray and left behind by their leaders.

[64] John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 416.

[65] James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ: A Treatise on the Nature, Powers, Ordinances, Discipline, and Government of the Christian Church* (1869; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2015), 446.

into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you. . . . He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it" (Titus 1:5, 9). As these verses demonstrate, the apostles ensured that the apostolic and orthodox teachings of the gospel could be imparted to every believer in the local churches by appointing qualified elders, who are called by Christ, for each congregation.

According to the Pastoral Epistles and other New Testament texts, the apostles did not directly appoint elders as if they were authoritarians. Following the apostles' instructions, the local churches elected elders qualified to shepherd their congregations. For instance, Luke witnesses that the elders were appointed through the congregations under the leadership of Paul and Barnabas: "And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed" (Acts 14:23). Commentating on this verse in his *Institutes*, John Calvin argues that one of the meanings of χειροτονέω (to appoint) is "to elect by a show of hands," a common procedure in the Greek polis.[66] In other words, although Paul and Barnabas were involved in the ordination process, the church ultimately declared their eldership by voting.

In this line of thinking, the BCM's claim that "pastors are biblical counselors" does not suggest that they hold greater authority in soul care than secular psychotherapists because of their experience or skills. Instead, their authority stems from their church-appointed role to proclaim the gospel on behalf of the Good Shepherd, to guide individuals toward greater Christlikeness, regardless of their circumstances. To put

[66] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, Library of Christian Classics (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 1:1059.

it differently, their authority is founded in their pastoral office, which the church authorizes to minister the teachings of Christ.[67]

In this context, pastors and elders should be seen as gifts granted to the church by Christ for its growth (Eph 4:11). They are individuals who have received training and preparation in orthodox teachings of Scripture to shepherd the congregation for its edification. Rather than holding a position of authority over the flock, they are specially called by Christ and authorized by the church to the ministry of the gospel. For this reason, their qualifications and character should be affirmed externally by the congregation through an election process.

In conclusion, it is essential to emphasize that the appointment of elders and pastors within the congregation was the Lord's choice, carried out in continuation of the succession from the inspired apostles. This appointment process aligns with the principles of apostolicity, which is one of the marks of the church outlined in the Nicene Creed, where the authority and teachings of the early apostles continue to shape and guide the Church throughout generations. By appointing elders and pastors, the Lord ensures that the apostolic and orthodox teachings of the gospel remain steadfastly taught and upheld within the local church, providing spiritual care and guidance to individual believers in their Christian journey.

The Plurality of Elders

J. T. Miller states, "No modern pattern of ordained ministry can claim to conform to what little we know about 'official' ministry in the New Testament."[68] In other words, it is difficult to determine which church polity is perfectly consistent with

[67] This is in line with Bucer's claim, "Anyone who does not serve the Lord by means of his word and Christian discipline in his church, but claims that rule for himself, is an antichrist." Bucer, *Concerning the True Care of Souls*, 13. Although it may sound harsh, Bucer asserts that pastors must counsel their members only through Scripture and not their opinions because they are ultimately called to represent the Good Shepherd.

[68] J. T. Miller, "Ministry," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner, IVP Reference Collection (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000).

the New Testament. Thus, I have no intention of arguing that one form of government is superior or more biblical to another. However, it seems clear that most biblical counselors adhere to Adams's shepherding model, which advocates for participating in multiple elder-led governance structures, as discussed in chapter 1 of this dissertation. In that sense, it is crucial to realize that the BCM's model of pastoral care is not a single-pastor model but involves a plurality of elders. This contrasts with the soul care systems led by a single pastor or outsourced to professional counselors.

As Johnson noted, contemporary American pastors frequently feel overburdened by pastoral counseling ministry because many are already overwhelmed with other ministries, performing the majority of church work on their own. In contrast, church elders are frequently viewed as symbolic figures or administrators.[69] However, in explaining 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13 in relation to pastoral counseling, Adams claims, "Here Paul speaks of the leadership of a congregation in pluralistic terms. The oversight is a joint one."[70] He asserts that pastoral counseling is not a task for just one individual; rather, it encompasses a collaborative effort among a team of elders who work alongside the pastor to address the spiritual well-being requirements of the congregation effectively.

Deepak Reju and Jeremy Pierre also stress the importance of the plurality of elders in counseling circumstances that may involve disciplinary measures. In the case of formal counseling, a group of elders can often determine the sincerity of a counselee's repentance when a counselor cannot determine whether the counselee is repentant or not. Pastoral counseling can benefit from increased wisdom and discernment through the oversight of multiple elders in the counseling ministry and engaging in conversations about the concerns and needs of the counselee. Thus, they express their gratitude and state, "Thank God for the shared wisdom of an elder board or pastoral staff. Because we

[69] Johnson, *The Church as a Culture of Care*, 114.

[70] Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 187.

do not have the immediate insight of the Holy Spirit, patient, hope-filled accountability with clear and reasonable standards is the best way to test the long-term trajectory of someone on the line."[71]

The stance of the BCM regarding the participation of a group of elders in the collaborative pastoral counseling ministry within the church aligns with the biblical theology of shepherding. As Adams observes, starting from Moses appointing elders following Jethro's suggestion (Exod 18), the leadership responsibilities were shared in the OT Israel communities. Adams emphasizes that this biblical tradition has been continued to the NT church: "The continuity of this eldership runs unbroken through the OT . . . and right into the book of Acts, where without so much as a word of explanation . . . Luke moves in one breath from the mention of the Jewish eldership to the mention of the eldership of the NT church. . . . One thing is clear: from beginning to end, congregations are described as having a plurality of elders, all of whom share in the management of the church."[72] Wayne Grudem agrees with this observation and claims that "there is quite a consistent pattern of plural elders as the main governing group in New Testament churches."[73]

Examining verses like Acts 14:21–23, Hebrews 13:17, 1 Peter 5:1–2, and James 5:14 prompts us to propose that the early churches likely appointed elders to undertake individual pastoral duties. These passages, featuring the collective mention of elders, imply that several elders collaborated within the early church settings to offer spiritual care to the community. Rather than being overseen by a single pastor or elder, the responsibility of tending to the congregation's well-being rested upon numerous elders designated to guide their local congregations. According to James White's

[71] Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling: The Basics of Shepherding Members in Need*, 9Marks (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 109.

[72] Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock*, 350.

[73] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 350.

exegesis of Acts 14:21–23, "The apostles . . . knew there was a need for encouragement, oversight, and order" in the churches; therefore, they appointed multiple elders to lead the church with the collective wisdom.[74] The apostles' appointment of multiple elders was a part of their mission of "strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith" (Acts 14:22, NASB). In other words, the plurality of elders in a local church is not only biblical but also practically beneficial for soul care ministry.

Numerous pastors find themselves in a daunting position when providing biblical counseling to their congregation. The plethora of duties inherent to pastoral ministry frequently causes this feeling of being overburdened. It is plausible that this overwhelming burden arises because they endeavor to shoulder the entirety of ministry, including counseling, without distributing the workload among their fellow elders. However, embracing the biblical framework of shepherding, which entails a cohesive team of elders possessing diverse gifts, can alleviate this overwhelming sensation. By doing so, pastors can liberate themselves from the weight of their tasks and offer more effective and comprehensive care. White elucidates that the concept of mutual submission within the elder group and a genuine appreciation for each other's contributions are remarkable remedies to the prevalent issue of the "one-man show" dominating today's churches.[75] This change can herald a more harmonious and effective approach to pastoral care ministry, ultimately benefiting pastors and their congregations.

The Authority of Pastoral Counseling Lies Not in the Person but in the Office

Examining pastoral authority through the biblical shepherding metaphor clarifies that it is a delegated authority. Shepherds of God's flock could never claim

[74] James E. White, "The Plural-Elder-Led Church Sufficient as Established: The Plurality of Elders as Christ's Ordained Means of Church Governance," in *Perspectives on Church Government*, ed. Chad Brand and Stan Norman (Nashville: B & H, 2004), 210.

[75] White, "The Plural-Elder-Led Church Sufficient as Established," 219.

ownership over the flock because God declares that they belong to him and calls them "my sheep" (Ezek 34:5, 6, 8, 10, 11). Also, in the NT, Christ claims ownership over his flock by calling them "my sheep" (Luke 15:6; John 10:26–27; 21:16–17). Nonetheless, Christ delegated pastoral authority to his disciples, particularly Peter, under his sovereign plan. Rodney Whitacre comments on John 21:16–17, "Jesus himself is the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:1–18), and now he commissions Peter to care for the flock that belongs to Jesus, for they are my lambs . . . my sheep. The community has already been established, and now Peter is given authority, though of a particular kind."[76]

This does not indicate that the authority was given to the person, Peter, as Roman Catholics argue. However, as Carson asserts, even though the "figure of the shepherd can be used to picture authority," Roman Catholics argue, "this passage does not establish that Peter has relatively more authority than other 'shepherds' of the flock of God."[77]

The delegation of authority to undershepherds in John 21 can be better comprehended by examining Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:1–14. When comparing the two passages, it is clear that Christ has granted equal authority to all shepherds within a local church entrusted with oversight of their congregation. For instance, in Acts 20, the Ephesian elders are called to guard and shepherd the flock as overseers appointed by the Holy Spirit. At the same time, Peter in 1 Peter 5 identifies himself as a "fellow elder" who encourages others to serve as shepherds and overseers, setting examples. Everyone, including Peter himself, is equal and accountable to the Chief Shepherd. Thus, the language in John 21:15–17 does not inherently indicate distinct authority for Peter, and

[76] Rodney A. Whitacre, *John*, IVPNTC 4 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 497.

[77] D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 678.

all Christian leadership involves a delicate balance between authority and humble service since their office derives from the Lord.[78]

The authority of the elders is not self-derived but instead derived from Christ. One cannot assume the role of an elder simply by expressing a desire to serve the church. Instead, he must have an internal calling by Christ (Jer 1:4–5; Acts 20:28), and the body of Christ must acknowledge the person's suitability for the role through ordination (Acts 1:15–26; 6:1–6; 1 Tim 3:2–13). As Derek Tidball argues, "Their authority rests on possessing the commission and possessing the gift; without those, they could have no authority, whatever their office."[79] In other words, Christ appoints elders through both internal and external calling, and thus their authority comes from him (Acts 20:28; Eph 4:11; 1 Tim 4:14). In that sense, Strauch noted, "As shepherds of the church, elders have been given authority to lead and protect the local church" by Christ.[80]

For this reason, Witmer claims that the elders' "exercise of the authority is designed to serve the well-being of those under its care."[81] Elders must recognize that they serve Christ's church with authority and care. Christ does not give them gifts and calls to rule over people for selfish reasons but to serve the spiritual needs of God's flock as servant leaders (1 Pet 5:1–3). The Chief Shepherd said that he came "not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt 20:28). Thus, Laniak claims that "good shepherding is expressed by decisions and behaviors that benefit the 'flock,'

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[78] Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 679.

[79] See Derek Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds: An Introduction to Pastoral Theology* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1986), 88.

[80] Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*, rev. ed. (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth, 1995), 97. Here, it is crucial to understand that the congregation's submission to the elders stems from their obedience to Christ and not from fear. Simultaneously, the elders must maintain a reverent fear of the Lord, who appointed them to their positions of authority, and use their power solely for the purpose of pleasing Christ and serving the church. In Ezekiel 34, the undershepherds who have abused their power and authority will face God's judgment, but those who faithfully serve Christ through care for his sheep will "receive the unfading crown of glory" (1 Pet 5:4).

[81] Timothy Z. Witmer, *The Shepherd Leader: Achieving Effective Shepherding in Your Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2010), 89.

often at great personal cost. It calls for the benevolent use of authority. . . . Some situations require militant protection and discipline, others beckon for gentle nurture."[82] Regardless of whether they are admonishing, encouraging, or helping the member (1 Thess 5:14), the elders must utilize their authority solely to benefit the church. Consequently, their conduct and judgments must be guided by the Word of God rather than their personal views.

Hebrews 13:17 helpfully explains the relationship between pastoral authority exercised through humble service for the sheep and the humble submission of the sheep to their shepherd. David Allen comments, "The present imperative 'obey' probably has an iterative sense of 'continue to obey' or 'obey on a regular basis.'"[83] In the same line of thinking, Paul Ellingworth also claims that the present imperative indicates the continuous act of obedience.[84] In response to the elders' pastoral care, Christians should trust their elders. Hence, a conclusion we can derive from this verse is that pastors should maintain close proximity to their flock, engaging in regular and ongoing shepherding practices through the private ministry of the Word. Simultaneously, the congregation should display a combination of humility and confidence in their elders' leadership, willingly submitting to their shepherding care.

The Pastoral Authority and Formal Counseling

In "Crucial Issues in Contemporary Biblical Counseling," Powlison proposes a helpful model for comprehending pastoral authority in biblical counseling.[85] He explains that the nouthetic aspect of biblical counseling serves as a backup and is

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[82] Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible*, NSBT 20 (Leicester, England: Apollos, 2006), 247.

[83] David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, NAC 35 (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 624.

[84] Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 723.

[85] David Powlison, "Crucial Issues in Contemporary Biblical Counseling," 9, no. 3 (1988): 65–70.

employed when the sheep wander or stray from the Shepherd's fence or biblical norms of Christian living. These confrontational but redemptive pastoral counseling sessions include but are not limited to, cases involving adultery, heretical teachings, domestic abuse, ethical failings of church leaders, and a variety of church community conflicts. In these formal counseling situations, the pastor would address the offender as an ordained representative of Christ's church to restore them through proper biblical disciplinary steps following Matthew 18. Adams viewed this formal private ministry as a critical part of pastoral care:

> In short, many sheep today are allowed to go their own way—even when straying into places where they endanger their own spiritual lives and the lives of other sheep around them. Apart from solid teaching from the Scriptures and an alert concerned eldership, members (and, eventually, whole congregations) will wander into paths of unrighteousness. God knew that it is disastrous for sheep to be left alone. They are defenseless; either they destroy themselves or allow others to destroy them. That is why He placed elder-shepherds, armed with their staffs, in the church.[86]

An intriguing aspect lies in Adams's use of the shepherd's rod and staff as representations of pastoral authority. While these metaphors carry some symbolic weight, they lack sufficient biblical-theological support to fully elucidate contemporary pastoral authority within the church.[87] Nevertheless, it is essential to note that Adams's concept of pastoral authority, embodied by the rod and staff, is not centered on the pastor but on the Word of God. In Adams's perspective, Scripture serves as the divine rod and staff for pastors to lead the lost and endangered sheep.[88] Thus, the BCM claims that formal

[86] Jay E. Adams, *The Use of the Rod and the Staff: A Neglected Aspect of Shepherding*, Ministry Monographs for Modern Times (Cordova, TN: Institute for Nouthetic Studies, 2020), 20.

[87] As previously examined in chapter 2, the cultural symbolism associated with shepherding offers valuable perspectives for comprehending the role of shepherds during biblical eras. Nevertheless, this symbolism lacks substantial theological substantiation for extrapolating its relevance to contemporary pastoral ministry. Moreover, the NT contains very few references to the shepherd's rod or staff, making it difficult to construct a comprehensive biblical-theological framework. The only verse with some relevance is 1 Corinthians 4:21. However, it is uncertain even there what Paul is referring to in relation to shepherding imagery.

[88] Adams, *The Use of the Rod and the Staff*, 23.

counseling entails a pastoral authority that could require the counselee's submission for their spiritual welfare.

However, according to Powlison, the confrontational and formal mode of pastoral counseling is a backup mode, whereas informal and familial counseling is the more common and typical mode of counseling within the church. He suggests that a significant portion of biblical counseling should not appear authoritative and that a pastor should minimize the authoritative, formal, confrontational, and unilateral aspects of counseling as much as possible. Adams seems to agree with this point by arguing that it is always better to prevent confrontational counseling. He explicates, "Those who listen to Jesus, Peter, and other apostles, and properly protect their flocks, will by doing so prevent many difficulties . . . to prevent problems through proper shepherding is to become so close to the sheep that you know them well and they know you and your voice."[89]

In conjunction with the theological observations made about pastoral authority through the imagery of biblical shepherding, pastors must prudently employ their delegated authority to restore lost and rebellious sheep to Christ. When the pastor boldly and lovingly proclaims the truth to those succumbing to heretical teachings or an ungodly lifestyle, he can save them from transgressions and restore their faith. However, as Powlison cautioned, formal pastoral counseling that may entail using pastoral authority in the form of confrontation should only be employed as a last resort. In the history of redemption, God has never disciplined his flock without compassionate patience. Due to his wise and loving way of showing discipline for his flock, the Bible attests that Shepherd's rod and staff comfort his flock by encouraging them to remain in his embrace (Ps 23:4).[90] Therefore, pastors should not abuse the authority entrusted to them, but

[89] Adams, *The Use of the Rod and the Staff*, 58.

[90] The biblical passages in line with the concept of God's compassionate discipline are: "Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the LORD your God disciplines you" (Deut 8:5), and

instead use it prudently only when necessary, preventing abuse by providing frequent preventative counseling and care.

Shepherding and Abuse of Authority

Critics have raised concerns about the potential for abuse within a nouthetic model of pastoral care. For example, Tidball argues that in the nouthetic pastoral counseling model, "The Bible is . . . used confrontationally as a tool of rebuke, in order to correct wrong behaviour, not as encouragement or *paraklesis*."[91] He argues that these forceful approaches could often lead to spiritual oppression rather than healing. Tidball also claims that the "practitioners of this approach can use the Bible very atomistically and credit pastors with a dangerous authority that leads them to give superficial answers to any and every problem when sometimes more in-depth treatment is required."[92] It is crucial to address the matter of pastoral or spiritual abuse with gravity, as particular churches that follow more extreme versions of the nouthetic counseling model are confronted with its consequences. These consequences encompass concerns such as the pastoral counsel on topics like domestic abuse, divorce, and tendencies toward blame and shame.[93]

"For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (Heb 12:10–11).

[91] Derek J. Tidball, "Use and Abuse of the Bible in Pastoral Practice: An Evangelical Perspective," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 32, no. 3 (July 2008): 204. Criticisms concerning Adams's counseling method are also found in William Challis, *The Word of Life: Using the Bible in Pastoral Care*, Handbooks of Pastoral Care (London: Marshall Pickering, 1997), 126–45, and Derek Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds: An Introduction to Pastoral Theology* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1986), 236–41.

[92] Tidball, "Use and Abuse of the Bible in Pastoral Practice," 205.

[93] To define spiritual abuse, Darby Strickland states, "Abuse that occurs when an oppressor establishes control and domination by using Scripture, doctrine, or their 'leadership role' as weapons. Spiritual abuse may mask itself as a religious practice, or be used to shame or punish." She also provides examples such as "using Bible verse to shame or control people, demanding unconditional obedience from them," or "using biblical texts and beliefs to minimize or rationalize abusive behaviors." In each of these instances, pastoral counselors who are meant to embody loving and faithful shepherds could end up abusing and hurting the sheep (Ezekiel 34, 1 Pet 5:3), presenting a severe misrepresentation of the Good Shepherd. Darby A. Strickland, *Is It Abuse? A Biblical Guide to Identifying Domestic Abuse and Helping Victims* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2020), 346.

The criticism aimed at the confrontational and potentially abusive aspects of the nouthetic model seems to stem from Adams's tendency to emphasize excessively the "professionalization" of pastoral counseling. While he initially highlighted the significance of informal peer counseling in *Competent to Counsel,* his later works like *Ready to Restore* and *Christian Counselor's Manual* demonstrate a shift in focus towards presenting pastoral counseling as a more authoritative practice akin to professionals chosen by God. In this model, it is no surprise that pastors need to speak into counselees' lives wisely but directly with many imperatives so they can repent and rearrange their lives in ways that align with Scripture. For example, in his commentary for Hebrews 12:4, Adams claims,

> There are times when all you can say to a counselee is, "Cut it out; your whining hardly becomes a servant of the suffering Savior!" Now I know it is often hard to draw the line between those who need encouragement and those who need rebuke. When in doubt, it is probably wise to err (if need be) on the side of compassion. But surely there is a time when some counselees must be faced with the absurdity of their attitudes and behavior.[94]

Although this is an understandable comment—there are moments when confrontational comments are necessary for counseling—comments such as these may result in misunderstanding for those who do not understand the nuances of biblical counseling. For this reason, Powlison critiqued Adams and insightfully stated, "I wish that Adams would regularly vary his perspective, would shift from the proclaimer of truth to the recipient of truth proclaimed and back again. He speaks almost exclusively from the standpoint of counselor to counselee."[95] In other words, he argues that pastors should not only see themselves as official counselors of the church but also as fellow sinners in need of God's grace.

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[94] Jay E. Adams, *Hebrews, James, I and II Peter, Jude*, CCC (Cordova, TN: Timeless Texts, 2020), 120.

[95] David Powlison, review of *Hebrews, James, I and II Peter, Jude*, by Jay Adams, *JBC* 15, no. 1 (1996): 63.

Powlison's perspective on pastoral authority aligns more closely with the biblical theology of shepherding. For instance, Acts 20:28 emphasizes the need for pastors to "pay careful attention" to themselves as well as to the entire flock, acknowledging that they, as fellow sinners, are susceptible to temptations and sin.[96] Consistent with this perspective, the cautionary examples of the malevolent shepherds depicted in Ezekiel 34 and Jeremiah 23 remind pastors to be responsible to God's flock. These examples underscore the need for pastors to embrace the gospel daily, enabling them to minister with humility and love rather than with pride and a domineering demeanor.

As Adams asserted, the pastoral office holds a certain authority level (*exousia*). However, those in this role must remain aware that their authority must resemble Christ, who used his authority to humbly serve and speak the truth in love. Reju warns,

> A misuse of pastoral authority is especially dreadful because the pastor represents God to his members. The pastor's character reflects, albeit imperfectly, the character of God to his people. If church members see the pastor abuse the sheep, they will begin to think poorly of God because of His undershepherd. So be warned: Don't give in to a lust for power and authority; rather, live a Christlike, humble life that is exemplary to all those around you.[97]

In this line of thinking, Powlison also critiques, "Adams rarely adopts the stance of fellow sufferer and fellow sinner in need of identical mercy and grace. This absence could create the impression that a counselor is an aggressive know-it-all, a trouble-shooting mechanic who fixes people's problems with Bible verses." When

[96] Dale Johnson also asserts, "But Jesus taught that an essential first part of that first step is self-examination. Matthew 7:3–5 tells us to take the log out of our own eye before we take the speck out of our brother's eye. This self-examination does not dismiss an offense, but it does help us to see an offense through a clearer lens." Johnson, *The Church as a Culture of Care*, 87.

[97] Reju, "Dear Pastor: Shepherd God's Flock," 41.

pastors forget that they are fellow sinners and sufferers in need of grace, they can become "domineering over those in [their] charge."[98]

In summary, Christ designates undershepherds for the welfare of his flock, necessitating the congregation's submission to the authority of the elders. Hebrews 13:17 underscores this idea, urging obedience and submission to leaders who vigilantly oversee souls and will be held accountable—this mutual submission benefits both the sheep and the elders. Just as the elders humbly submit themselves for the church's betterment, the congregation reciprocates by recognizing and respecting their authority and willingly adhering to their guidance. This relationship is not blind obedience but a symbiotic dynamic wherein elders lead humbly and the congregation follows with trust and esteem. Simultaneously, the elders must maintain a reverent fear of the Lord, who appointed them to their positions of authority and use their power solely to please Christ and serve the church. As Ezekiel 34 declares, the undershepherds who have abused their power and authority will face God's judgment, but those who faithfully serve Christ through care for his sheep will "receive the unfading crown of glory" (1 Pet 5:4).

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have explored the alignment between the BCM's assertion that pastors should provide biblical counseling to their congregants and the biblical theology of shepherding. From an anthropological perspective, I contend that while the shepherding metaphor does not overtly endorse a dichotomous view, it implicitly supports it. Consequently, pastors are entrusted and equipped to offer biblical counseling to guide their congregants toward a life of sanctification, representing the primary goal of pastoral ministry and counseling.

Similarly, an epistemological angle shows that, as creatures, humans are reliant on the Shepherd to lead and nurture them in living according to the truth. From

[98] Powlison, review of *Hebrews, James, I and II Peter, Jude*, 64.

this standpoint, pastors, equipped with a foundation in God's Word, are qualified to extend biblical counsel to their congregants. It is important to clarify that this does not negate the potential participation of lay individuals in the church's counseling ministry. Nonetheless, the underlying message gleaned from a biblical theology of shepherding underscores the deliberate design of the church, positioning pastors as leaders in counseling ministries.

Transitioning to the ecclesiological perspective, we have discerned that pastors are competent to offer biblical counseling due to their training in the Word and designation as shepherds of the church. Numerous facets of the biblical theology of the shepherding metaphor have been employed to elucidate this perspective. However, amid this exposition, the contentious issue of pastoral authority within the biblical counseling movement has also come to light.

Drawing insights from the shepherding metaphor, the argument has been presented that Powlison's model, which emphasizes both authority and humility in pastoral counseling, resonates more closely with the biblical depiction of shepherding ministry. This perspective underscores the harmonious interplay of pastoral authority and humility, a fitting approach within the broader context of the church's shepherding ministry as revealed in the Bible.

CHAPTER 4

USING THE SHEPHERDING METAPHOR TO ANALYZE THE BCM'S CLAIM THAT PASTORS SHOULD EQUIP BIBLICAL COUNSELORS

Introduction

According to the Biblical Counseling Movement (BCM), pastors have been primarily responsible for caring for the souls of the congregation. However, they also assert that caring for everyone in the church is the shared responsibility of all saints. God has called the whole church, not just the pastors, to care for one another. For this reason, Ephesians 4:12 teaches that Christ has gifted the leaders in the church to equip the saints for their work in the ministry.[1] Other passages in the NT, such as Galatians 6:2 and Colossians 3:16, also assert the mutual ministry among the saints for the communal growth of the church. In this regard, T. Dale Johnson claims, "By God's design, Christ is the head of the church and its Chief Shepherd. Elders shepherd the flock of God as stewards and caretakers for Christ's sake. However, every believer is called by God to minister to one another."[2] In this regard, the BCM has emphasized the role of pastors to equip biblical counselors in the church and equip and empower Christians for mutual ministry to one another. The church cannot function as God's caring community unless

[1] Paul Tautges, *Counsel Your Flock: Fulfilling Your Role as a Teaching Shepherd*, Ministering the Master's Way (Leominster, England: Day One, 2009), 52–71. Also, refer to chapter 2 of this dissertation for more information.

[2] T. Dale Johnson Jr., *The Church as a Culture of Care: Finding Hope in Biblical Community* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2021), 135.

pastors, the trained and authorized ministers of the Word, teach and prepare God's people for mutual care ministry.[3]

In this chapter, the BCM's second claim that pastors should equip saints as biblical counselors will be evaluated from three theological angles: anthropological, epistemological, and ecclesiological, using the biblical theology of the shepherding metaphor. The anthropological segment will primarily expound upon the aim of soul care in connection with the definition of biblical well-being and the equipping role of the pastor. The epistemological portion will elucidate the training required to accomplish the soul care goal described in the anthropological section. The ecclesiological segment will outline the significance of the pastor's role within the soul care community, namely, the church.

An Analysis of the BCM's Claim from an Anthropological Standpoint through the Shepherding Metaphor

We should pose two anthropological questions for assessing the claim: What constitutes biblical well-being for humans? Moreover, what kind of process is required to achieve biblical well-being? These questions are significant because the definition of mental health adopted by the church can significantly influence the ministry process dedicated to pastoral soul care. From this standpoint and through the shepherding metaphor, I will assess the pastoral theology of the BCM that advocates communal participation in soul care ministry and the pastor's role as the equipper of biblical counselors.

[3] This does not imply that pastors must be certified by a biblical counseling organization. The pastor is qualified to provide biblical counsel and equip Christians to serve in the church solely because of their internal and external callings, which have been prepared through proper theological training and recognition of the church.

The BCM's Goal for Soul Care and Corporate Sanctification

Various Christian counseling models share similar yet different goals. Nonetheless, the most widely accepted soul care goal is that of integrationist Christian counseling. The goal of integrationist counselors is based on their trichotomic anthropology, which aims for physical, spiritual, and psychological well-being. These aims constitute holistic soul care in the integrationist's conceptual framework.

For instance, the integrationist counselor's functional trichotomic perspective of human nature creates a distinct therapeutic goal and model for each component (body, soul, spirit). For example, Gary Collins posits that although all human problems ultimately result from sin, "not all human problems are spiritual, in that they involve the counselee's specific relationship with God."[4] Siang-Yan Tan claims that "at times suffering and anguish may be part of God's process of perfecting His Children in the image of Christ."[5] Following Vernon Grounds's argument, Tan reminds the readers that even Jesus endured suffering. However, he never sinned, even as he experienced deep distress in the garden of Gethsemane.[6] In that sense, integrationist counselors assert that a counselor must approach spiritual issues about God and spiritual growth through biblical teachings and guidance. However, the counselor must also address psychological concerns, such as consciousness, intelligence, cognition, motivation, emotion, and behavior, with the help of secular psychotherapy. Clyde Narramore advocates a

[4] Gary R. Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, 3rd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 824. Collins argues, "The Bible, however, never claims to be a psychiatric diagnostic manual and textbook of counseling procedures any more than it claims to be a medical text. . . . Some problems, for example, may be caused by faulty learning, misinformation, early trauma, environmental stress, biological malfunctioning, chemical deficiencies, misperception . . . or other issues that may not be discussed by biblical writers."

[5] Siang-Yang Tan and Eric T. Scalise, *Lay Counseling: Equipping Christians for a Helping Ministry*, rev. and upd. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 40.

[6] Vernon C. Grounds, *Emotional Problems and the Gospel*, Contemporary Evangelical Perspectives (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 31–41.

trichotomous approach: (1) the medical doctor treats the body; (2) the pastor addresses the spiritual nature; and (3) the psychologist is necessary for the soul.[7]

In contrast, the BCM firmly adheres to a dichotomous view of human nature and has a distinct purpose for soul care ministry. As discussed in chapter 1, sin is the most fundamental counseling problem for biblical counselors. To be precise, sin's distortion of the human spirit or heart is all-encompassing, affecting cognitive, emotional, and volitional aspects. In the biblical counselor's theological framework, there is no distinct inner entity apart from the heart, such as the "psyche." All internal distress within the human heart stems from sin.[8] Therefore, biblical counseling aims to help individuals experience salvation and progressive sanctification from sin through the Word of God and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Together, these elements form the essence of biblical well-being.

An alternative way to describe biblical well-being is to say that a person is made right with God (justification) and conforms to Christ's likeness (sanctification). Concerning sanctification, Heath Lambert explains that

> sanctification has the goal of developing Christlikeness in the entirety of who we are. . . . we are sanctified as we look to Christ, who is the aim of our sanctification (2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 5:2; Heb. 12:2). This Christlikeness happens in our whole person as we are changed from our inner person in thoughts, feelings, desires, and consciences as these flow out to the outer person in our physical behaviors.[9]

In that sense, an individual's relationship with God and their resemblance to the likeness of Christ in their relationship with others demonstrate their inner health.

At this point, it is critical to highlight the significance of the communal aspect of biblical sanctification. The BCM considers sanctification to extend beyond the

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[7] Adams cites Clyde Narramore for promoting such a view. See Jay E. Adams, *Theology of Christian Counseling: More Than Redemption* (Grand Rapids: Ministry Resource Library, 1986), 110.

[8] Refer to chapter 1's "Anthropological" section for more information on this topic.

[9] Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 293.

individual's growth in healthy cognition, emotion, and volition of the heart. Biblical counselors believe that personal sanctification is ultimately expressed through an individual's reflection of Christ in their love and service to their brothers and sisters. First Timothy 1:5 declares, "The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith." To phrase it in another way, the highest manifestation of sanctification is demonstrating love for fellow brothers and sisters through mutual service, fostering collective sanctification and growth. Jay Adams explains 1 Timothy 1:5 in relation to the biblical counseling ministry: "Your aim in counseling, however, unlike theirs, must be to produce biblical love in your counselees. If love, as defined in the Scriptures ('if you love Me, keep My commandments'), is not the result of your counseling, either you or the counselee (or both of you) have been aiming poorly. Your target, always**,** must be love."[10] Thus, the goal of soul care and sanctification encompasses not only personal growth but the growth of the entire church community. For this reason, David Powlison claims,

> There is a sense where I am not perfected until you are perfected. We are not perfected until every single one of us, the children of the living God, is perfected, which means I have a stake in another person's struggle as part of my own sanctification. Sanctification is not a private endeavor. It is not a moral self-improvement project. It is not less than that, but it is so much more than that, because the actual things that are improved about us actually tie us to the welfare of other people.[11]

As Joseph Hellerman observes, modern American evangelical Christians living in an individualistic society do not readily understand the concept of communal or corporate sanctification. Hellerman argues that just as we discover our justification upon salvation through our relationship with God the Father, we also become integrated into a spiritual family, connecting with fellow believers in Christ and fostering collective

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[10] Jay E. Adams, *I Timothy, II Timothy, and Titus*, Christian Counselor's Commentary (Cordova, TN: Institute for Nouthetic Studies, 2020), 6.

[11] David Powlison (interview), "Ask Pastor John: Can I Grow in Holiness without the Church?," April 13, 2015, *Ask Pastor John*, ep. 573, produced by Desiring God, podcast, 7:28, https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/can-i-grow-in-holiness-without-the-church.

growth as one unified body in Christ.[12] Hellerman's argument is based on the fact that Jesus's calling of his disciples resulted in forming a new Kingdom family, which he prioritized over biological and earthly families. This view aligns with John Calvin's argument that a person cannot be justified and sanctified without the visible church as the "mother" of believers: "For there is no other way to enter into life unless this mother conceives us in her womb, gives us birth, nourishes us at her breast, and lastly, unless she keeps us under her care and guidance until, putting off mortal flesh, we become like the angels [Matt. 22:30]."[13]

In this family of God, Christians are called to speak the truth to one another and grow together as one body in Christ (Eph 4:11–16). Geoff Thomas asserts, "It is not the preacher who is exclusively the one to be teaching us; every single Christian has something to offer to us, but to profit from them, we have to be with them. To be with them, we must love the Lord's people."[14] This is essentially what it means to undergo progressive and communal sanctification toward becoming more Christ-like, as explained in 1 Timothy 1:5. Christians cannot grow into the likeness of Christ without being transformed to love and serve the church because they cannot grow without the dynamics of mutual service toward one another.

In this context, God calls pastors to arrange and institute an effective system of soul care within the church, allowing each member to contribute actively to one another's spiritual development by being biblical counselors. Members cannot effectively participate in one-another ministry without proper ecclesiological infrastructure and training. For this reason, the BCM has developed various ministry structures for biblical counseling into four categories (see chap. 1). Robert Jones helpfully categorizes biblical

[12] Joseph H. Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family: Recapturing Jesus' Vision for Authentic Christian Community* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2009), 132.

[13] Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, Library of Christian Classics (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 2:1016.

[14] Geoff Thomas, "Corporate Sanctification," *Banner of Truth*, no. 713 (February 2023): 10.

counselors into four groups: (1) members providing personal care and basic counsel to one another, (2) group leaders and mentors providing formative discipleship and spiritual direction, (3) church-designated counselors and trainers, and (4) pastors and elders.[15] Garrett Higbee categorizes different types of biblical counseling ministry using a spatial metaphor: the welcoming lobby, the second floor, the third floor, the fourth floor, and the fifth floor. [16] The welcoming lobby refers to "the mutual ministry of the one-anothers happening" in daily interactions of the congregants. The second floor refers to the mutual confession of sin and the ministry of the Word occurring in authentic small groups among the church members. The third floor refers to the ministry of equipping small group leaders in biblical counseling with the help of biblical counseling coaches. The fourth floor refers to a ministry of pastors that equips the biblical counseling coaches. Lastly, the fifth floor refers to a ministry of experiential equipping in intensive soul care that focuses on the church's most broken and hurting people. Within an alternate ministerial structure, Brad Hambrick divides biblical counselors into two categories: those engaged in G4 counseling groups and those participating in GCM mentorship programs.[17] Hambrick offers specialized curricula for various counseling subjects, enabling lay counselors to conduct personal ministry using pre-established guidance.[18]

Just as creating a clean water environment for fish to thrive is essential, a pastor must build a robust biblical counseling or soul-care ministry system within the church. Furthermore, he should train and prepare each member, tailoring their

[15] Robert D. Jones, Kristin L. Kellen, and Rob Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives: An Introduction to Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling* (Nashville: B & H, 2021), 24.

[16] Garrett Higbee, "The Practicality of the Bible for Becoming a Church of Biblical Counseling," in *Scripture and Counseling: God's Word for Life in a Broken World*, ed. Robert W. Kellemen and Jeff Forrey, BCCB (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 231–35.

[17] According to Hambrick, G4 is a counseling model based on groups, while GCM (Gospel-Centered Marriage) is a marriage mentoring ministry. The "G" in G4 stands for the Gospel, and the "4" represents the four types of groups that can be part of G4: recovery groups, process groups, support groups, and therapeutic educational groups. See Brad Hambrick, *Mobilizing Church-Based Counseling: Models for Sustainable Church-Based Care* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2023), 9–10, 24.

[18] Hambrick, *Mobilizing Church-Based Counseling*.

involvement in soul care ministries according to their growth level and unique spiritual gifts. This kind of pastoral involvement enables Christians to undergo corporate sanctification in their journey toward becoming more like Christ and the people of God.

Analysis of the Anthropological Aspect of the Claim through the Shepherding Metaphor

As presented in chapter 2, the shepherding metaphor reveals that the goal of the Christian life is to follow Christ, the Good Shepherd, and become more like him as one passes through the wilderness of life into glory. More specifically, to follow the Good Shepherd as part of his flock means embracing a life that forsakes sin and pursues righteousness (1 Pet 2:24–25). Also, following Christ involves experiencing the transformative force of his resurrection, which leads to sanctification, shaping one into the image of Christ.

Through this transformative journey, believers gain a deeper understanding of God and themselves, resulting in spiritual growth, as Calvin famously claimed in the *Institutes.* According to Calvin, true wisdom begins with the knowledge of God, and this knowledge is inseparable from understanding oneself apart from God. Calvin argues that without knowledge of God, one cannot truly know oneself, and vice versa.[19] In this light, biblical counseling's objective for personal transformation aligns with the shepherding metaphor. Its goal is not self-actualization or self-realization, as secular psychotherapy often claims. Instead, it involves the process of self-denial and the abandonment of sin in a desire to follow and know Christ as the sheep follow the Shepherd (Phil 3:10–11; 1 Pet 2:21).

Moreover, the shepherding metaphor also reinforces the BCM's claim that pastors should equip biblical counselors, considering the theological concept of corporate sanctification. Reflecting on the biblical theology of the shepherding metaphor, Timothy

[19] Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:35–36.

Laniak claims, "Members of the church are not only sheep but also emerging shepherds who will become like their leaders in serving others."[20] This means that even though the sheep do not hold the official role of pastor, a position exclusively designated for those specifically called by Christ and affirmed by his church, Scripture suggests that they are to grow and become more like the Good Shepherd. Specifically, they are to accomplish this with humility and willingness as they follow their leaders who exemplify the life of Christ (1 Cor 11:1; Phil 3:17; 4:9; 1 Pet 5:2). In that sense, Scripture requires Christians not to remain immature, like a flock always receiving care; rather, Scripture challenges Christians to emulate their leaders, advance toward maturity, and become more like Christ, who lovingly sacrificed his life for his flock (Phil 2:5–7; Eph 5:1–2; 1 Pet 2:21–24)

Pastors have a unique calling to teach and equip sheep by modeling Christ and helping them become more like the Good Shepherd who serves others (1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; 1 Thess 1:6). The pastor's task to train and equip God's people into a mature flock is most evident in Ephesians 4:11–16. Among many passages concerning the mutual ministry of the Word (e.g., Rom 12:6–8; 1 Pet 4:10–11), Ephesians 4:11 connects to the shepherding metaphor, as Paul teaches that "pastor-teachers" or "shepherd-teachers" are in charge of equipping the saints for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ.[21] They are to equip Christians so that they would not remain in a child-like

[20] Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible*, NSBT 20 (Leicester, England: Apollos, 2006), 234. It is crucial to emphasize that the interpretation of Laniak's argument necessitates consideration of its context. He is not arguing that the flock can somehow become shepherds within the local church. The biblical "shepherding" language does not imply that sheep, excluding pastors, can achieve the status of shepherds.

[21] In reference to the church offices mentioned in this verse—the apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers—various theological interpretations exist, particularly regarding the last two offices. While many evangelical theologians agree that the first three offices have ceased, there is a divergence of opinion regarding the roles of pastors and teachers, leading to two distinct viewpoints: a one-office view and a two-office view. In this dissertation, I present the one-office view, which argues that pastors and teachers have a unified role. This choice is influenced by the support of two prominent figures in the BCM, Jay Adams and David Powlison, who advocate for the one-office view. While it is acknowledged that there may be dissenting opinions among biblical counselors, I believe that for the evaluative context of this dissertation, it is a prudent methodological approach to argue from the vantage

spiritual state but grow into "to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Eph 4:13–14). This kind of corporate growth can only happen through "speaking the truth in love" (Eph 4:15). Peter O'Brien notes, "The apostle is not exhorting his readers to truthfulness in general or speaking honestly with one another, however appropriate or important this may be. Rather, he wants all of them to be members of a 'confessing' church, with the content of their testimony to be 'the word of truth,' the gospel of their salvation (1:13)."[22]

Who bears the responsibility of equipping the saints? Does the passage imply that the growth of the body of Christ occurs through the mutual sharing of truth in love among its members? Or does it suggest that pastors are tasked with speaking the truth in love to facilitate the church's growth? Andrew Lincoln offers valuable insight on these important questions: "Although this building up is also the task of all the members of the body (v 16), the ministers have a distinctive and particularly significant role to play in it."[23]

Hence, Ephesians 4:11–16 imparts the understanding that sanctification aims to attain "mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." A person who is achieving this level of maturity possesses the capacity to impart truth or share the gospel's message with others. In essence, they have transitioned from solely being recipients of ministry to mature Christians serving as exhorters and encouragers. This concept aligns with the shepherding metaphor, which underscores the transformation of sheep into a mature Christlike flock. As the apostle Paul emphasizes,

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point advocated by Adams and Powlison. Jay Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock: A Handbook on Pastoral Ministry, Counseling, and Leadership*, Jay Adams Library (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 7.

[22] Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 311. The author acknowledges awareness of the decision by William B. Eerdmans, publisher of Peter O'Brien's *Ephesians* commentary, to withdraw this work from print, citing concerns about the unauthorized use of secondary
sources. For more information, see http://web.archive.org/web/20160816191752/http://www.eerdmans.com/Pages/Item/59043/Commentary-Statement.aspx.

[23] Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC 42 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 255.

the appointed shepherds or pastors are responsible for assisting the flock in attaining such maturity.

The interpretation of Ephesians 4:11–16 through the shepherding metaphor aligns with the broader context of redemptive history. In the Old Testament, God entrusted his flock's care to Israel's leaders even though they were sheep themselves. Put differently, God raised them from being ordinary sheep, part of God's flock, to shepherds of Israel (e.g., Ps 78:70–72). As God's representatives, they were to guide, nourish, heal, and gather God's people, as outlined in Ezekiel 34:2–4. However, Jeremiah 23:1–4 and Ezekiel 34 vividly expose the failure of these Old Testament shepherds. Instead of faithfully tending to God's flock, they exploited and mistreated the people for personal gain. Consequently, the Lord cursed these shepherds and promised to appoint new shepherds who would align with his own heart (Jer 3:15).

Concerning Jeremiah 3:15, where God promises "shepherds" after his own heart for Israel, some commentators claim that these shepherds refer to post-exilic national, religious, and political leaders who will lead the restored government in Zion.[24] Other commentators, such as F. B. Huey and Tremper Longman, propose a biblical-theological interpretation that refers to the Messianic King in its allusion to King David, who was also after God's own heart (1 Sam 13:14; Ezek 34:23; Acts 13:22).[25] These two perspectives do not conflict; rather, they illuminate distinct facets of the verse. The former concentrates on the immediate historical context through grammatical-historical exegesis; the latter centers on the canonical interpretation, comprehending the verse retrospectively within the context of the completed canon.

[24] Peter C. Craigie, Page H. Kelley, and Joel F. Drinkard Jr., *Jeremiah 1–25*, WBC 26 (Dallas: Word Books, 1991), 60; Leslie C. Allen, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 57.

[25] F. B. Huey Jr., *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, NAC 16 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1993), 75. Tremper Longman III, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, Understanding the Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008), 80.

Interpreting the verse from a canonical context, the Messianic fulfillment must be highlighted more than the immediate post-exilic interpretation for fuller meaning. Richard Lint states, "Canonical analysis seeks to bring to light this sort of historical matrix that holds biblical history together and provides the conceptual framework through which all of history is to be understood."[26] Graeme Goldsworthy claims, "For hermeneutics to be gospel-centered, it must be based on the person of Jesus Christ. That is, the person and work of Christ are at the heart of our hermeneutics."[27] Thus, Christ is the ultimate Good Shepherd of God's flock that the Lord promised to his people for generations. As examined in chapter 2, God fully demonstrates in and through Christ his faithfulness to carry out his promises concerning the pastoral care of his people.

Significantly, Christ, the Chief Shepherd, has gifted the church with pastors who exemplify his heart and serve as his representatives in guiding the congregation. Thus, in the light of redemptive-historical interpretation, Calvin asserts that the "shepherds" in Jeremiah 3:15 also refer to the NT pastor-teachers: "God speaks here of a continued course of instruction, and of a well-regulated government in the Church, as though he had said, 'I will not only give you prophets to lead you from your wanderings to me and to restore you to the way of salvation, but I will also continually set over you sound and faithful teachers.'"[28]

God has provided the church with faithful pastor-teachers to nurture individuals, enabling them to progress from mere sheep to a Christlike flock. These maturing sheep can share truth in love to build up the body of Christ through the ministry

[26] Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 308.

[27] Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 58.

[28] John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah and the Lamentations*, trans. John Owen, 5 vols. (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 1:181.

of the Word. This transformation is a vital component in the accomplishment of corporate sanctification.

In conclusion, Reformed anthropology is profoundly influenced by God's remarkable decision to bestow royal privileges upon his creation, as Revelation 20:4–8 illustrates. To bear God's image means to share in his rule and stewardship.[29] Thus, Christians' destiny transcends mere sheepish existence; they are called to mature into a flock mirroring the love and care of the Good Shepherd. Through the transformative journey of progressive sanctification, Christians learn to love and serve one another, guided by a radically different ethos than domineering worldly leadership. While not everyone may hold official titles or functions as elders, their collective aspiration is to emulate the character of the Good Shepherd, embodying his love and servant-leadership, fulfilling God's creation intention for his flock. Miroslav Volf refers to this theological concept of spiritual growth as the personhood of the ecclesial community. We understand what we need to become as human beings through the church's ministry in Christ, and we also come to know our identity through the church. Volf asserts, "The interdependence of ecclesial being and the will to ecclesial life . . . presupposes an anthropology according to which sociality and personhood are two mutually determinative and essential dimensions of human existence."[30] In this sense, the BCM's claim that pastors should equip biblical counselors aligns with the biblical theology of shepherding metaphor.

An Analysis of the BCM's Claim from an Epistemological Standpoint through the Shepherding Metaphor

The BCM recognizes that biblical counseling is a communal obligation of all church members to speak the truth in love for and to one another. A person cannot

[29] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 248.

[30] This anthropological concept is also related to Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, Sacra Doctrina (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 181.

spiritually mature without the mutual ministry of the church. Therefore, pastors should encourage the reception and giving of biblical counsel among church members to promote spiritual growth (Eph 4:15). As Bob Kellemen notes, "Biblical counseling is not simply a ministry of a few in one corner of the church, but a mindset of an entire congregation that the Bible is sufficient for every life issue."[31] With this theological and epistemological conviction, the BCM argues that pastors should equip and encourage every member to offer and receive biblical counsel in order for the church to grow and achieve collective sanctification. This section will explore this assertion by applying the shepherding metaphor. A thorough evaluation of the claim will be conducted before delving into this metaphorical analysis.

An Examination of the BCM's Epistemological Conviction of the Claim

Although the mutual ministry of the Word is necessary for the corporate sanctification of the church, it is not something that a theologically untrained layperson can accomplish effectively without proper training and equipping. Although God's Word is inherently capable of leading people to repentance and offering consolation, the more theologically accurate application of the Word should be carried out mainly by seasoned Christians with theological training (2 Tim 2:15; 2 Pet 3:16). One purpose of the pastoral office is to facilitate this process (Eph 4:11–12; 1 Tim 2:2; 3:2; Titus 1:9). Furthermore, to engage the local church in theologically healthy mutual ministry of the Word, pastors are responsible for preparing every Christian to become well-versed in the Word, enabling them to effectively provide counsel to one another (Eph 4:11–16; Col 3:16).

More specifically, the BCM claims that pastors must equip and lead the church to become a counseling community that is theologically equipped to interpret an

[31] Bob Kellemen, *Equipping Biblical Counselors: A Guide to Discipling Believers for One-Another Ministry* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2022), 29.

individual's identity, situation, suffering, and solutions through the Word of God (Eph 4:11–12). For instance, Jeremy Pierre argues that Scripture is sufficient to help us "see" things. More specifically, he claims that Scripture is a *control belief* or *theistic matrix* "that serves as the framework" for interpreting all things in life, including the counselee's identity, situation, suffering, and even solutions to all human problems. In that sense, we can infer that pastors must teach and equip lay counselors to "see" or interpret the counselee's life through the lens of Scripture.[32]

According to the BCM, while not everyone possesses in-depth theological expertise, pastors should strive to educate all church members so they can offer counsel to each other based on the soundest doctrine within their knowledge and capability. Specifically, lay counselors should be prepared to recognize and address the counselee's sinful thought patterns and behaviors while fostering a biblical perspective that impacts how the individual perceives and responds to their situation. However, before knowing how to apply Scripture to the counselee's life, Jay Adams argues that it is important for biblical counselors to have the ability to self-counsel through training. He asserts, "The Holy Spirit uses counselors to right wrongs by the application of God's Word to human problems. Knowledge of Scripture does not mean merely the memorizing and cataloging of facts. One in whom the 'word of Christ dwells richly' (Col 3:16) is one who knows the meaning of Scripture for his own life. Because he is capable of solving his own problems scripturally, he is qualified to help others do so."[33] This approach ultimately assists the entire church community to respond to one another's sufferings and sins in ways consistent with the biblical worldview, fostering their sanctification as the body of Christ.

[32] Jeremy Pierre, "Scripture Is Sufficient, but to Do What?," in Kellemen and Forrey, *Scripture and Counseling*, 101.

[33] Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel: Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling*, Jay Adams Library (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 61.

In that sense, the BCM views biblical counseling as discipleship, not psychotherapy. More specifically, problem-targeted discipleship is personalized for a specific individual in a particular situation. Kellemen claims that "we should think of biblical counseling as synonymous with comprehensive personal discipleship. Biblical counseling is focused on another ministry designed to fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission."[34] Therefore, biblical counseling is a theological and personal method of helping one another experience holistic sanctification (cognition, emotion, and volition) through the impact of God's Word. In this context, the BCM claims that pastors are responsible for equipping lay Christians with the theological and practical skills needed to become biblical counselors to participate in mutual ministry. This is crucial because, within the church, it is God's design for his people to offer counsel to one another grounded in the truth of the Bible. Offering profound insight and wisdom, the Bible is the epistemological norm for understanding and interpreting the human experience. It also provides gospel-centered solutions for those grappling with suffering and sin.

Analysis of the Epistemological Aspect of the Claim through the Shepherding Metaphor

Currently, Christian counselors have differing perspectives regarding the issue of how to train lay counselors. The variations in counseling education arise from the distinct epistemological beliefs held by specific Christian counseling groups. For instance, a Christian counseling group, like integrationist counselors, prioritizes psychology over theology regarding epistemological significance and will educate lay counselors using secular psychological approaches. There are numerous choices for lay counseling programs in local churches to enhance pastoral care and counseling ministry in the integrationist camp. To name a few, Stephen Ministry (active listening), Larry

[34] Kellemen, *Equipping Biblical Counselors*, 31.

Crabb's Effective Biblical Counseling model (cognitive and solution-focused), and Jack Frost's Shiloh Place (inner healing) are widely utilized in local churches today.[35] According to Fernando Garzon and Kimberley Tilley, these lay counseling models in local churches are generally more helpful in caring for church members than professional counseling, though more research is necessary in this area.[36]

With this context in mind, I will examine the BCM's epistemological claim that pastors should equip biblical counselors through the biblical shepherding metaphor. Especially from an epistemological perspective, this section will explore what it means for biblical counselors to attain theological knowledge for counseling. The reader may find this chapter valuable for evaluating the BCM's stance on pastors equipping Christians as biblical counselors and gaining insights into the objectives and training prerequisites of a biblical lay counseling ministry.

The shepherding metaphor offers a valuable perspective for the Christian counseling community to grasp the essential training required to nurture competent lay counselors. Within the context of the biblical theology of the shepherding metaphor, one can argue that biblical counselors are not meant to be "professional" counselors. This is in line with the criticism against the "professionalization" of pastoral ministry. Quentin Kinnison asserts that the OT and NT analysis of the shepherding metaphor clearly demonstrates that modern church leadership, which is immersed in professionalism and the business model, is not aligned with the biblical vision of pastoral ministry. Likewise, contemporary Christian counseling does not align with the shepherding role of biblical leaders who lead God's flock.[37]

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[35] See Larry Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling: A Model for Helping Caring Christians Become Capable Counselors* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014).

[36] Fernando L. Garzon et al., "Lay Christian Counseling and Client Expectations for Integration in Therapy," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 28, no. 2 (January 2009): 131.

[37] Quentin P. Kinnison, "Shepherd or One of the Sheep: Revisiting the Biblical Metaphor of the Pastorate," *Journal of Religious Leadership* 9, no. 1 (2010): 59–91.

In contrast, to lead and comfort others through biblical counseling, biblical counselors should embody a level of spiritual maturity that reflects the qualities of the Good Shepherd. More specifically, their role involves skillfully guiding God's people through the teachings of the Bible under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Additionally, they are to function as spiritually mature shepherds, equipped with faith, knowledge, and godliness to lead others, regardless of whether they hold official ecclesiastical titles like pastor or elder.

A biblical counselor must be trained in Scripture to gain deep insight into people, problems, and solutions through a biblical perspective. John Henderson urges the importance of teaching theological content to the trainees in an interview with Bob Kellemen: "We want to see growth in theology/truth/biblical knowledge and practical implications of these content areas; understanding the gospel and how it speaks to daily life and struggles; understanding people and how to love, listen, and encourage them; common errors or false teachings that assault sound biblical counseling and how to answer these from Scripture."[38]

One can argue that the BCM's view on counseling is remarkably similar to personal discipleship. For instance, Kevin Vanhoozer asserts that discipleship is about changing the person's perspective on life through theology: "Making disciples involves more (but no less) than informing minds or forming habits. It also involves transforming imagination, the primary ways they see, think about, and experience life."[39] Jay Adams also highlighted the importance of biblical and theological training of biblical counselors: "Knowledge of the Word of the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, is an essential qualification for this kind of [nouthetic] confrontation."[40]

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[38] Kellemen, *Equipping Biblical Counselors*, 193–94.

[39] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Hearers and Doers: A Pastor's Guide to Making Disciples through Scripture and Doctrine* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), xxv.

[40] Jay E. Adams, *The Big Umbrella: And Other Essays on Christian Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 144.

However, a study of the shepherding metaphor, as explored in chapter 2, reveals that Christian knowledge is not merely about acquiring factual knowledge of the truth. For example, we have examined the biblical and theological aspects of the passages in Philippians 3:10–11 and 1 Peter 2:21, contending that the proper knowledge of Christ involves following the Shepherd by sharing in his suffering and death. In this context, acquiring spiritual knowledge entails gaining personal or existential understanding through the Word of God working in the Holy Spirit, resulting from being united with Christ in his resurrection, suffering, and death. Christian epistemology, therefore, encompasses not only informational aspects but also existential and experiential dimensions.

The connection between knowing Christ and becoming like him is also another way to understand Christian epistemology. For instance, John's theology of knowing and following the Shepherd in John 10:27 indicates that the sheep has a cognitive knowledge of the Shepherd's voice (Words) that results in their following him (experiential and existential). In explaining those who did not believe in Jesus, Gerald Borchert claims,

> Their problem, Jesus said, was not lack of Information but failure to belong to his sheep. His sheep understood his works (10:25) and his words (10:27), the indication of true knowing. Accordingly, Jesus knew them, and they evidenced knowing him by "following" him (10:27). Once again John makes clear that his works and words are from the Father (he is God's agent) and that Jesus' message is not just about cognitive knowledge but about a personal relationship with Jesus.[41]

Furthermore, John's eschatological understanding of knowing and becoming like Christ is extensively developed in the Book of Revelation. In Revelation 2–3, the author exhorts the followers of Jesus to endure suffering and stay faithful to their beliefs, aiming to ultimately "overcome" (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). As a result, they understand that the ultimate price for upholding their testimony is death or martyrdom, as

[41] Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1–11*, NAC 25A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 338–39.

Christ had also died on the cross (Rev 6:9). Similarly, in 7:9ff, a vast multitude of the faithful are depicted wearing white robes that have been purified "in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev 7:14). George Eldon Ladd asserts that this great assembly likely faced martyrdom after enduring great tribulation. They remained unwavering in their faith, cleansing their robes with the Lamb's blood to stay pure and resolute in their devotion to Christ.[42] Conclusively, Revelation 14:4 says, "They follow the Lamb wherever he goes." Commentating on this verse, Laniak notes, "While John's visions are cosmic in scope, they exhibit a sustained focus on Christ's followers—on their loyalty, sacrifice and final destination."[43] In other words, for the followers of Christ, the knowledge is not merely informational but experiential and existential.

According to David Clark, this particular understanding of epistemology using the shepherding metaphor is consistent with conservative evangelical theology:

> Evangelical systematic theology is this: it is the science by which evangelical believers learn of God. It is rooted in the Bible and focused on Christ. Through this knowledge, the Spirit transforms us into followers of Christ and forms us into Christian communities, awakening in us the wisdom of God that leads to genuine worship and cultural transformation. Through theology, we know and love God.[44]

In other words, theology is more than just conveying factual knowledge about God; it is the application of truth to transform individuals and communities, a concept akin to wisdom. In contrast to lifeless orthodoxy or misguided heresy, authentic theological comprehension is intricately linked with personal experience. While the cognitive aspect of theology is crucial, it alone cannot fulfill the transformative goals of theology. The evangelical distinction lies in the blend of spirituality, theological insight, and experiential understanding. It is about knowing *and* loving God.[45]

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[42] George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 119.

[43] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 241.

[44] David K. Clark, *To Know and Love God: Method for Theology*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), xxxii.

[45] Clark, *To Know and Love God*, xxix.

Indeed, someone with a firm grasp of theology and psychology is often seen as a competent counselor in contemporary Christian counseling communities. However, when viewed through the lens of the shepherding metaphor, a biblical counselor is not someone who merely has vast knowledge of theology and psychology. Instead, a biblical counselor is a faithful follower (or sheep) of the Good Shepherd whose life is transformed by the knowledge of the truth, someone who can resemble the Good Shepherd to others by reflecting Christ's Word and character. In *Instrument in the Redeemer's Hands,* Paul David Tripp explains that a biblical counselor starts by applying the gospel to his own heart before he can represent Christ to the counselee:

> Being an instrument of heart change means following Christ's example and focusing on the heart—starting with your own. . . . Starting with your heart means understanding and submitting to God's calling, which will shape your life and relationships. God has called us to nothing less than incarnating Christ to others. I am to be rooted in the Word, and zealous to bring the living Word—Christ—to lost, blind, and struggling people. You and I are called to put flesh and blood on who Christ is and what he came to do.[46]

Likewise, John Murray summarizes Christian maturity in line with the church ministry: "The goal of the triune nature of the church is found in God himself. It is to *know* the Lord, to *do* the Lord's will, and to *be* like the Lord."[47] Murray's analysis of Christian growth includes three interconnected aspects: "knowing the Lord," "doing the Lord's will," and "being like the Lord." This theological analysis of maturity in Christ helps us to see that the biblical understanding of growth is multifaceted. It is epistemological, existential, and ontological, which aligns with the shepherding metaphor. To know the truth as a Christian is to attain head knowledge and become more like Christ throughout the entire being.

For this reason, biblical counselors must imitate the Shepherd in their service for his flock. In other words, despite being sheep, they should care for other sheep,

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[46] Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change*, Resources for Changing Lives (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002), 97.

[47] Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church*, CCT (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 143.

following the Good Shepherd's model. Possessing mere factual knowledge of theology and psychology is insufficient. Primarily, they must be individuals who have personally experienced the gospel's transformative power in their lives, clearly understanding how God sanctifies his people.[48] Furthermore, they must experientially know how to depend on and follow Christ in life to care for others effectively. In this sense, Jeremy Lelek claims that "counseling is a practice of learned dependency," not depending on our limited knowledge or ability but on God's transformative power through the Spirit.[49]

Jay Adams argues that the eligibility of biblical counselors is not solely contingent on their theological education but also on their qualifications.[50] He supports his argument by referencing the qualifications of elders outlined in Titus and 1 Timothy. He underscores that many of these qualifications revolve around personal and spiritual maturity. Thus, he organizes a counselor's qualifications into four aspects: (1) Scripture knowledge of the will of God (Rom 15:14; Col 3:16); (2) divine wisdom in one's relationships to others (Col 3:16); (3) goodwill and concern for other members of the body of Christ (Rom 15:14); and (4) being a man of faith and hope.[51] Concerning the qualifications for biblical counselors, Kellemen categorizes them as Character, Content/Conviction, Competence, and Community (the 4Cs).[52]

In conclusion, while discussions on lay counselors' epistemological and ontological aspects have taken place in the past, the shepherding metaphor emphasizes

[48] Titus 2:1–10 is a helpful passage that shows the importance of spiritual maturity in a biblical counselor. A person who is capable of teaching others is the one reflecting spiritual maturity that resembles Christlikeness.

[49] Jeremy Lelek, *Biblical Counseling Basics: Roots, Beliefs, and Future* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2018), 179.

[50] Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 59.

[51] Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling*, Jay Adams Library (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 14.

[52] Kellemen, *Equipping Biblical Counselors*, 203.

the need to emphasize the maturity of biblical counselors.[53] In this framework, the biblical analogy of shepherding, illustrating God's intent to raise his flock into Christlike sheep and his shepherds into sacrificial lambs, can be employed as a blueprint for training lay counselors. Pastors nurture the congregation to become a Christlike flock, just as they selflessly dedicate their efforts to the growth and well-being of the congregation. In that sense, the church is the optimal setting for cultivating and equipping lay counselors. Through the guidance and personal apprenticeship of their local church pastors, lay counselors can acquire theological understanding, pastoral qualities, and commitment to the spiritual well-being of individuals (1 Cor 11:1; Eph 4:11–13).

An Analysis of the BCM's Claim from an Ecclesiological Standpoint through the Shepherding Metaphor

The BCM's focus on the pastor's role in soul care is rooted in their ecclesiological conviction that the sanctification of believers necessitates the presence and participation of all members in the body of Christ for the mutual ministry of the Word.[54] In this theological framework, the pastor is crucial in preparing Christians to become biblical counselors, fostering a culture of mutual ministry to sanctify the entire church. In contrast to secular psychotherapy, which employs medical analogies as its primary conceptual framework and lacks a communal approach to inner well-being, biblical soul care is firmly grounded in ecclesiology.

Concerning the ecclesiological aspect of soul care and corporate sanctification, Paul Tautges claims that Christians must learn and practice being filled with God's Word, living with the Holy Spirit's guidance, prioritizing the gospel, relying on God through prayer, being motivated by love for God and others, and showing

[53] For instance, refer to the following resources: Kellemen, *Equipping Biblical* Counselors, 165; Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 95–114.

[54] Refer to chapter 1's "Ecclesiological" section.

compassion to help each other grow in their journey to become more like Jesus.[55] Along the same lines, Powlison claims, "The body of Christ becomes most itself when expressing this Christ: admonishing the unruly, encouraging the faint-hearted, holding on to the weak, being patient with them all (1 Thess 5:14). This is a comprehensive 'counseling' vision."[56] Powlison asserts that it is essential for pastors to take a leading role in training lay counselors and overseeing the church's counseling ministry as a whole: "Pastor, you are a counselor—and much more than a counselor. A pastor also teaches, equips, supervises, and counsels other counselors. You are the counselor-in-chief."[57]

From this perspective, this section will investigate the BCM's ecclesiological assertion that pastors are responsible for equipping biblical counselors. This will be accomplished by delving into the shepherding metaphor to address two significant questions: (1) Does the shepherding metaphor align with the BCM's belief that the church is the primary institution through which God sanctifies and cares for his people via the mutual ministry of the Word? (2) Does the shepherding metaphor depict pastors as the individuals responsible for equipping biblical counselors?

Analysis of the Ecclesiological Aspect of the Claim through the Shepherding Metaphor

Does the shepherding metaphor align with the BCM's claim that the church is the primary institution through which God sanctifies and cares for his people via the mutual ministry of the Word? Answering this question requires examining the way the

[55] Paul Tautges, *Counseling One Another: A Theology of Interpersonal Discipleship* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2015), 14.

[56] David Powlison, "The Pastor as Counselor," *JBC* 26, no. 1 (2012): 38. In another article, Powlison claims, "Soul care and cure—sustaining sufferers and transforming sinners—is a component of the total ministry of the church according to the Bible (however poorly we may be doing the job)." David Powlison, "Counseling Is the Church," *JBC* 20, no. 2 (2002): 3.

[57] Powlison, "The Pastor as Counselor," 24.

New Testament characterizes the church using the shepherding metaphor (i.e., John 10:16; Acts 20:28; Eph 4:11; 1 Pet 5:1–3). Understanding this biblical connection is pivotal since it forms the theological foundation for recognizing the church's role in soul care. Once this association is clarified, we can turn our attention to the second part of the question, which pertains to the mutual ministry of the Word among God's people within the church.

In *Images of the Church in the New Testament*, Paul Minear and Leander Keck explain the shepherding metaphor in relation to the church and argue that "the picture of the flock belongs inseparably to the picture of the shepherd (*poimēn*). The master image, rightly seen, is that of shepherd-and-flock. Never does either shepherd or flock appear without implying the other."[58] Thus, to understand the church through the shepherding metaphor, it is crucial to clearly understand its connection to God, the Shepherd of his people. In this line of thinking, Chad Brand claims, "God's people can be described as a flock shepherded by God (Ps. 100:3; Jer. 23:3; Ezek. 34:31) or by Christ, 'the great Shepherd of the sheep' (Heb. 13:20; cp. John 10:11; 1 Pet. 5:4). . . . The unity of all Christians is pictured by the image of one flock composed of many folds (John 10:16)."[59]

According to Laniak, "Shepherd language is not only linked to the fuller metaphor of the community as God's flock. This matrix of images is integrally connected to the metanarrative of Scripture."[60] For instance, from a biblical-theological perspective, the OT people of God were misled and mistreated by selfish human undershepherds (Ezek 34; Jer 23:1–7; 50:6; Zech 11:15–17). However, in the last days, the church saved by Christ no longer must live in fear and confusion because God has given them the

[58] Paul Sevier Minear and Leander E. Keck, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Louisville: Presbyterian, 2004), 19.

[59] Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England, eds., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Holman Bible, 2003), s.v. ""Flock."

[60] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 250.

Good Shepherd as he promised (Jer 23:3; Ezek 34:23; Mic 5:4; Zech 13:7). The Good Shepherd also brings other sheep (Gentiles) into the same fold (John 10:16), he feeds sheep who have no shepherd (Matt 9:36; Mark 6:34), and he gathers the lost sheep (Matt 10:6; 15:24). The "little ones" he affectionately refers to as his sheep receive attentive care under his watchful shepherding (Matt 18:10–14; Luke 12:32).[61] In this context, the shepherding metaphor unveils God's primary purpose for the church, which is to provide faithful care for his flock.[62]

In this context, the NT authors likely drew upon the OT shepherding metaphor to explain the church because it conveys a profound historical imagery of God's nurturing and protection of his people. As discussed in chapter 2, the shepherding imagery in the OT conveys the notion of God's faithful care for his sheep. Consequently, the NT authors utilized the metaphor to explain God's faithful care for the church (his flock) through Jesus Christ, the promised Good Shepherd, who will lead them through the eschatological journey to the Promised Land. Thus, the NT church is likened to God's flock, which the Shepherd knows, leads, gathers, protects, and nurtures. Specifically, it is depicted as God's flock, under the care of the Good Shepherd, who sacrificed his life and was resurrected for their salvation. The church is God's flock, and Jesus is the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet 5:2–4).

As outlined in chapter 3, it is unmistakably clear that the Chief Shepherd profoundly cares for his people. Consequently, he has appointed pastors (elders) as his chosen human shepherds to provide attentive care to his flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:1–4). Pastors are to model the Good Shepherd in everything they do to lead the sheep.

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[61] Matthew utilizes the same allegory of "little ones" in explaining the final judgment in 25:31–46. In this passage, the Messiah, as the Shepherd of the flock, separates the sheep from the goats. In this passage, Jesus refers to Christians as "one of the least of these my brothers" (Matt 25:40).

[62] For this reason, many contemporary pastoral theologians have utilized the shepherding metaphor to elucidate their theories and methods of pastoral care. I recommend consulting David Davidson's analysis on this topic for further information. David Allen Davidson, "An Examination of the Shepherding Metaphor in Pastoral Theology" (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022).

Moreover, they are called to faithfully shepherd and care for God's people, even to the point of sacrificing their lives for the flock as Christ did for them (John 10:15).

Furthermore, when viewed from a redemptive-historical perspective, the shepherding metaphor reveals that the responsibility for soul care extends beyond pastors and elders. Instead, it is a collective duty of the entire church, and the entire flock of God must actively participate. As discussed in the epistemological section of this chapter, the shepherding metaphor shows the dual dynamic between the sheep and shepherd imageries. As Minear claims, "In this flock every shepherd is himself a lamb and every lamb a shepherd."[63] To rephrase, when Christians are in union with Christ, they join the "flock" of God that is entirely dependent on the Shepherd's care (John 10:14–18). At the same time, the flock is called to grow into the likeness of the Good Shepherd and mutually love and care for one another (John 13:34; Eph 5:1–2; 1 John 4:11). While not all of the verses listed are explicitly related to the shepherding metaphor, the "one-another" passages in the New Testament indicate the church's responsibility to provide mutual care for one another.

In this framework, the pastor's calling also must be understood within the context of one-another ministry. In Ephesians 4, before explaining Christ's provision for the pastoral office for the church, Paul declares, "But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift" (Eph 4:7). That is to say, out of many gifts related to the mutual services in the church, Christ has selected some to be official shepherds of the church. Also, the intensifying pronoun (αὐτός) in Ephesians 4:11 emphasizes that "some" Christians are called by the Lord himself, sovereignly chosen and enabled for the service for one another.[64] In this context, it is essential to grasp the

[63] Minear and Keck, *Images of the Church in the New Testament*, 87.

[64] Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, ZECNT 10 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 224–45.

pastoral vocation within the broader framework of God's summons for every Christian to engage in church ministry (Eph 4:11–16; 1 Pet 2:9).

The duality within the flock, comprising sheep and shepherds, mirrors the dual role of Jesus as both the Good Shepherd and the Lamb of God.[65] Minear further contends that Jesus's death as both the lamb and the shepherd deeply permeates the core framework of communal life as God's flock: "He [Jesus] had purchased this flock with his own blood (Acts 20:28); he thus established for both sheep and shepherds the final norm of their behavior and of their union with him."[66] Christ, the Good Shepherd, serves as the norm that both lay Christians and pastors should follow in service to him and one another.

Within the paradigm of the shepherding metaphor, the church represents God's flock, gathered by Christ for guidance and care until their ultimate destination is reached (Rev 7:17). In a similar fashion to how the nation of Israel received salvation through the lamb's blood and followed Moses as their typological shepherd on their journey to the Promised Land, the church, redeemed by the lamb's blood, is now guided by Christ, the ultimate Shepherd, on its path to the New Heaven and Earth.[67] Under the Shepherd's watchful care, they have the assurance of reaching their final destination securely. Throughout this journey, Christ provides care and guidance for them by appointing human undershepherds (pastors and elders). However, it is crucial to recognize that pastors and elders are just one component in Christ's grand shepherding plan. Ultimately, Christ nurtures his people through his entire body, the church, which encompasses every Christian and their various gifts. Examined from this angle, it is of

[65] Concerning this complex dual side of the metaphor, Minear explained, "The idiom as a whole preserves a distinction between shepherd and flock, but it also, somewhat illogically, subordinates both leaders and followers to the same law of self-giving love and divinely shared life." Minear and Keck, *Images of the Church in the New Testament*, 87.

[66] Minear and Keck, *Images of the Church in the New Testament*, 88.

[67] Refer to M. E. Boismard, *Moses or Jesus: An Essay in Johannine Christology*, trans. B. T. Viviano (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

utmost importance to regard the church as the embodiment of the Shepherd's body, wherein the Good Shepherd diligently employs the diverse gifts he has granted to his flock to care for one another.

To address the second question, Does the shepherding metaphor depict pastors as the individuals responsible for equipping biblical counselors?, we must begin by defining the biblical roles of the pastor. As discussed in chapter 2, the core responsibilities of pastors and elders, when viewed through the shepherding metaphor, include knowing, leading, gathering, protecting, and nurturing God's flock to meet every spiritual need of the flock. What is particularly interesting is that all of these shepherding functions are carried out through the teaching ministry of God's Word. By teaching the Chief Shepherd's message, the undershepherds lead and care for the flock under their care. Hence, in the New Testament, the term "pastor" appears only once and is closely linked with the term "teacher" in Ephesians 4:11.

The word "shepherds" (ποιμένες) has been used numerous times in verb forms in the NT, but it is only in Ephesians 4:11 that the word is used in noun form in reference to the pastoral office. John Muddiman notes, "'Pastor' (i.e., shepherd) occurs only here in the New Testament with reference to an order of ministry, though related pastoral metaphors are found in Acts 20:28, 1 Pet. 5:1–4 and John 21:16. It implies care and nurture of the faith of a local congregation."[68] From this perspective, verse 11 carries great significance as it directly associates ecclesiological eldership with the shepherd metaphor and explicitly introduces it by describing the pastoral office in conjunction with the teaching ministry. Thus, it is crucial to grasp the close relationship between the elders' shepherding role and teaching, as indicated by the Greek grammatical structure: τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους. John Stott asserts, "The Christian pastoral ministry is essentially a teaching ministry, which explains why candidates are required both to be

[68] John Muddiman, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, BNTC (London: Continuum, 2001), 199.

orthodox in their own faith and to have an aptitude for teaching (e.g., Titus 1:9; 1 Tim 3:2)."[69]

Pastors should primarily be understood as shepherd-teachers in the church, who are called "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12). More specifically, according to E. Y. Mullins, to "equip" (καταρτισμὸν) means "to mend, to complete, to fit out, to make one what he ought to be."[70] The term is also employed in Matthew 4:21, describing the act of mending nets. So, just as Peter readied his nets for his trade, pastors are called to "ready" or "equip" the flock for "the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12).

However, what should pastors equip or prepare God's people for? This depends on the interpretation of Ephesians 4:12. Some contemporary commentators, including Stephen Fowl and Steven Baugh, argue that verse 12 should be understood as three different clauses as it is translated in the Authorized Version: "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."[71] In this case, the pastor-teachers are in charge of three different aspects of ministries—perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, and edifying the body of Christ. However, as many scholars have traditionally argued, the verse should be understood in a sequence as translated in ESV: "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ."[72] According to this translation, the pastors provide the necessary training for individuals to engage in acts of service, ultimately contributing to the growth and strengthening of the body of Christ. Considering the broader context of Ephesians and

[69] John R. W. Stott, *Guard the Gospel: The Message of 2 Timothy*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1973), 108.

[70] Edgar Young (E. Y.) Mullins, *Studies in Ephesians* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1935), 96.

[71] Stephen E. Fowl, *Ephesians: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 141; Steven M. Baugh, *Ephesians*, EEC (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 336.

[72] Walter L. Liefeld, *Ephesians*, IVPNTC 10 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), s.v. "The Purpose for the Gifts (4:12–26)," Logos.

chapter 4, this interpretation appears more reasonable. Walter Liefeld cogently explains, "While the grammar could support the idea that in this particular place, Paul is focusing only on the ministry of the leaders, we know from verse 7 that every believer is gifted and contributes to the building up of the body. That is the most likely meaning here in verse 12."[73] Similarly, O'Brien claims that the letter underscores the sharing of Christ's riches among all believers, emphasizing that each member, including those mentioned in verse 11, is equipped for ministry, with a focus on "Word" ministries and highlighting the collaborative relationship between gifted members and leaders for the benefit of the entire body.[74]

It is essential to notice that Paul used the metaphor of "building up" the body of Christ in verse 12 to explain the purpose of equipping. Paul has used this particular metaphor many times (Rom 15:2; 1 Cor 14:12; Eph 2:22; 4:29; Col 2:7; 1 Thess 5:11), often referring to "the mutual building up in which believers must engage."[75] Additionally, Paul asserts that pastors are responsible for stimulating and equipping Christians in the building up of the body of Christ through the mutual ministry among the members (Rom 15:20; 1 Cor 3:1–15; 2 Cor 10:8; 13:10). Through the teaching ministry of the pastors, Paul aimed to cultivate personal, corporate, and social holiness.[76] As discussed in the anthropological section of this chapter, the corporate sanctification and

[73] Liefeld, *Ephesians*, s.v. "The Purpose for the Gifts (4:12–26)."

[74] O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 303. Further, the letter as a whole has emphasized Christ's riches being received by all the saints (1:3–19; 3:20), while the immediate context of vv. 7–16 is framed by an insistence at the beginning of the paragraph that each believer was given "grace" (v. 7), and at its conclusion that the whole body is growing from the head as each part (v. 16) does its work. If it is only the leaders of v. 11 who perfect the saints, do the work of ministry, and edify the body of Christ, then this is a departure from Paul's usual insistence that every member is equipped for ministry. It is better, therefore, to regard those enumerated in v. 11 as helping and directing other members of the church so that all may carry out their several ministries for the good of the whole. An emphasis on "word" ministries corresponds with Romans 12:6–8 and the ranking of 1 Corinthians 12:28, while the connection between the "special" ministers and others enhances our understanding of the relationship between gifted members and gifted leaders.

[75] Derek J. Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds: An Introduction to Pastoral Theology* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1986), 101.

[76] Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds*, 102.

growth of the church occurs when the entire church participates in mutual ministry. Concerning this, Bruce Barton notes, "The church builds itself in the faith as the members care for one another, show love, and generally manifest the other gifts God gives (as mentioned in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12). . . . Fulfilling this command solo would be impossible. But God calls us as members of his body. No one should be a bystander, an observer. Everyone must do the work of ministry."[77]

Christ designated pastors to prepare every church member for active participation in the ministry of mutual care. This preparation involves teaching and equipping, as outlined in Ephesians 4:11–12. Pastors are responsible for educating church members on various topics for the one-another ministry. The pastor's teaching equips the members to serve using their unique gifts within the mutual ministry of the church; this ministry can encompass a wide range of services, such as assisting those experiencing financial hardship and offering support through diverse methods. However, as Kellemen argues, the pastor's primary goal is to train and equip every member into disciple-makers or biblical counselors capable of "speaking the truth in love" (Eph 4:15) to one another:

> The body of Christ builds itself up in two specific, cohesive ways: doctrinal unity and spiritual maturity (Ephesians 4:12–13). When a congregation knows the truth not just academically but personally, their love abounds in knowledge and depth of insight (Philippians 1:9–11). . . . Christ's grand plan for his church is for every member to be a disciple-maker by speaking and living gospel truth to one another in love.[78]

This argument aligns with my observations from this chapter's epistemological section. The biblical metaphor of shepherding illustrates God's purpose to shape his flock into sheep who care for one another within the church. This implies that the members of the flock must mature into the likeness of the Good Shepherd, who gave his life for them. In this context, Scripture encourages the flock to not merely

[77] Bruce B. Barton, *Ephesians*, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1996), 83–84.

[78] Kellemen, *Equipping Biblical Counselors*, 42.

acquire more knowledge about theology and ministry, but to "transform" into a Christlike flock (or disciple-makers) ready to make sacrificial commitments for the church through speaking the truth in love.

Furthermore, when viewed through the lens of the shepherding metaphor, one could argue that the instructional role of pastors, referred to as "equipping" in verse 11, signifies the process of preparing the members of the flock to grow into a Christlike flock. These maturing sheep are expected to model the qualities of the Good Shepherd in order to lead and care for others as biblical counselors (or disciple-makers). This argument is reasonable because Paul asserts that the pastors are to train every Christian for the work of "ministry" or "service" (διακονία). This indicates that the "church is not built by one man or even a few men, but by every believer being actively involved in ministry through evangelizing the lost people in their lives and serving their fellow Christians."[79]

Thus, the analysis of the shepherding metaphor and Ephesians 4 demonstrates that the fulfillment of the pastoral ministry is not derived from its existence, but rather from the task of equipping others to serve. Pastors are not solely tasked with tending to the congregation they oversee; they are also called to equip every Christian to become spiritually mature, prepared to speak the truth in love to one another to build up the body of Christ (Eph 4:11-16). This collective effort aims to nurture the body of Christ toward spiritual maturity. Hence, Kellemen emphasizes the significance of pastoral qualifications with the statement, "His pastoral ministry description demands the ability to equip others to do the work of the ministry."[80]

[79] Paul Tautges, *Discipling the Flock: A Call to Faithful Shepherding* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2018), 61.

[80] Kellemen, *Equipping Biblical Counselors*, 38.

Conclusion

In the anthropological section, I have clarified that the process of sanctification is not an individual pursuit; instead, it is a corporate effort because Christian growth is intricately connected to the well-being of others. Essentially, a Christian is not genuinely maturing unless actively engaged in serving others within the church. Consequently, Christians cannot develop Christlikeness without undergoing a transformation involving genuine love and commitment to serving the church. This perspective aligns with the shepherding metaphor, viewing each Christian as a sheep who would emulate the Good Shepherd, protecting and caring for the flock. Within this community of shepherds and sheep, pastors are tasked with equipping every member to become part of a Christlike flock, corresponding to their sanctification.

The epistemological section thoroughly explains the BCM's claim that pastors should train biblical counselors. This assertion stems from their theological conviction that Scripture alone is sufficient and that lay Christians can apply the truth in their roles as biblical counselors and disciple-makers. This stance aligns with the shepherding metaphor, as the biblical-theological analysis of the metaphor indicates that every Christian should mature into the likeness of the Good Shepherd and sacrificially care for one another. However, I have critiqued that such ministry is achieved only through proper theological training of the pastors. Per Christian epistemology, pastors should instruct lay biblical counselors to acquire experiential and ontological knowledge of the gospel to effectively care for one another.

Lastly, in the ecclesiological section, I explained that the BCM's proposition regarding pastors equipping biblical counselors is grounded in their belief that the entire church is designated for soul-care ministry. The redemptive-historical perspective of the shepherding metaphor reveals that the responsibility of soul care transcends the role of pastors and elders. Instead, it is a collective responsibility of the entire church, requiring active participation from the entire flock of God to care for one another. In that sense, the

biblical shepherding metaphor envisions pastors as the ones in charge of teaching and equipping the entire church to participate in the mutual ministry of the Word to cultivate corporate growth of the body of Christ (Eph 4:11-16).

CHAPTER 5

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY PASTORS, CHURCH, AND BIBLICAL COUNSELING ORGANIZATIONS

Much of what is deemed successful pastoral ministry today relies on leadership models diverging from biblical principles. Hence, the biblical and traditional responsibility of elders to personally care for members has been considered insignificant in the context of modern pastoral ministry.[1] Many pastors choose to refer troubled and suffering church members to secular mental health professionals, avoiding the challenges of genuine pastoral care.[2] This trend was evident in the mid-1900s, when the BCM first emerged, and continues to be prevalent in many Protestant churches. Even among the churches that embrace the biblical counseling movement, biblical pastoral counseling is not fully understood and adopted in the pastoral ministry. The BCM's theological vision aims to establish a church that prioritizes the care of souls by asserting that pastors should provide biblical counseling to their members and equip them as mature Christians prepared to give biblical counsel to one another.[3]

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[1] For a more in-depth understanding of the decline of pastoral care in American churches, consult E. Brooks Holifield's extensive historical research on pastoral care and Andrew Purves's theological research on pastoral theology. E. Brooks Holifield, *A History of Pastoral Care in America: From Salvation to Self-Realization* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983); Andrew Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology: A Christological Foundation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004).

[2] David Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement: History and Context* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2010), 21–50.

[3] It has been explained in previous chapters that the BCM's vision is to provide biblical counseling and equip Christians for the ministry of biblical counseling. This task should not fall solely on one pastor, but rather on multiple elders in the church. This is because providing pastoral counseling and equipping can be overwhelming and even unfeasible for one pastor, especially in medium and large-sized churches with more than 100 members. Therefore, it is important to establish an effective care and training system with multiple leaders in place. While the lead pastor may not be able to conduct regular biblical counseling and training for biblical counseling, he can still take responsibility for caring and training the congregation with the help and support of elders and lay leaders.

This dissertation examined the BCM's claim that pastors should serve as both biblical counselors and equippers of biblical counselors, utilizing the shepherding metaphor found in the Bible. While the dissertation is organized to assess the BCM's claim through the lens of shepherd theology, its primary goal exceeds mere validation; it seeks to explore the broader implications of pastoral counseling ministry for contemporary pastoral ministry. The ultimate goal is to restore counseling to the local church by reminding pastors and elders of their pivotal roles in this initiative.

This chapter does not attempt to construct a practical framework or manual for pastoral counseling ministry since employing a single biblical metaphor to formulate a ministry system is not theologically prudent or comprehensive. Instead, this chapter aims to highlight specific challenges and opportunities within the ongoing advancements in the biblical counseling movement concerning the role of pastors as counselors and equippers in the church, leveraging theological implications derived from the analysis presented throughout this dissertation.

To offer a clear critique and suggestions for advancing the movement's pastoral theology, I will rely on the following working definition of pastoral counseling, which I have formulated through this analysis:

> Pastoral counseling, according to the biblical theology of shepherding metaphor, is a *personal* and *authoritative* ministry of the Word in which pastors, as undershepherds of Christ, intimately know, gather, guide, nurture, and protect each member of the flock under his care using Scripture with the *plurality* of elders and *mutual* care of the saints in the church. Their pastoral care and counseling seek to facilitate spiritual maturation by equipping and empowering individual sheep to become sheep more capable of caring for one another within the church alongside their elders.

Though this definition will not constrain the discussion, it will serve as a conceptual framework, allowing readers to understand the context of my discussions on specific topics.

Personal: Two Personal Dimensions of Pastoral Counseling

Pastoral counseling is the personal ministry of the Word. Compared to preaching or other public ministries of the Word, pastoral counseling cares for individual souls through personal relationships and face-to-face conversations.[4] However, the biblical theology of the shepherding metaphor introduces the collective and individual dimensions of pastoral counseling. Following Timothy Witmer's terminology, one could contend that pastoral counseling involves both micro and macro elements. Witmer suggests that "there are important tasks that the elders are called upon to fulfill on a corporate, congregational level. On the other hand, the foundation of a shepherd's ministry must be in personal care and interaction with their sheep."[5]

The distinction between micro and macro dimensions in pastoral ministry is not foreign to the Bible. For instance, in his poignant farewell message to the elders at Ephesus, Paul reminded them that he "did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable and teaching you in public and from house to house" (Acts 20:20). This statement demonstrates that Paul's pastoral ministry encompassed public and private dimensions. This pastoral model is also readily observed in Jesus's ministry, which included private and public aspects (Matt 4:23; 14:13–14; Mark 1:38; 6:31).

Although Witmer limits pastoral counseling as a micro, or personal, aspect of pastoral ministry, pastoral counseling has both macro and micro dimensions.[6] The biblical theology of the shepherding metaphor demonstrates that the shepherd is responsible for offering counsel to individual sheep at a micro level. At the same time, he

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[4] Refer to Jay Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock: A Preacher's Handbook on Pastoral Ministry, Counseling, and Leadership*, Jay Adams Library (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 172; William W. Goode, "Biblical Counseling and the Local Church," in *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically*, ed. John Macarthur and Wayne A. Mack (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 23–24; T. Dale Johnson Jr., *The Church as a Culture of Care: Finding Hope in Biblical Community* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2021).

[5] Timothy Z. Witmer, *The Shepherd Leader: Achieving Effective Shepherding in Your Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2010), 103.

[6] Witmer, *The Shepherd Leader*, 160–61.

is tasked with providing counsel to individuals in the church on a macro level. From a micro perspective, he must approach and invite his sheep for personal counseling and discipleship to care for their souls. From a macro perspective, his role is to train lay counselors and organize a care system for individuals where he may employ different gifts within the church to provide the best care for the hurting. Both aspects constitute the personal ministry of the Word carried out by pastors. For this reason, Powlison claims, "Pastor, you are a counselor—and much more than a counselor. A pastor also teaches, equips, supervises, and counsels other counselors. You are the counselor-in-chief."[7] Using an analogy by Robert Kellemen, the macro and micro dimensions of pastoral counseling can be compared to air and ground wars.[8] Although Kellemen uses this analogy to explain the distinction between the private and public ministry of the Word, I use it to explain the dual nature of the pastor's personal ministry of the Word.

As the shepherd of the church, a pastor is called to guide counseling efforts at the micro and macro levels. Confining pastoral counseling solely to the micro level is not in line with biblical pastoral ministry, as one-on-one counseling is intended for all church members. What sets pastoral counseling apart from lay counseling is its ability to navigate counseling at a macro and collective level by harnessing the support of the body of Christ to aid an individual in distress through the personal ministry of the Word. Introducing the concept of pastoral counseling through the lenses of micro and macro dimensions presents a fresh perspective within the biblical counseling movement and Christian counseling in general.

[7] David Powlison, "The Pastor as Counselor," *JBC* 26, no. 1 (2012): 24.

[8] Robert Kellemen, "The Public and Private Ministry of the Word," *Everyday Christian* (blog), April 15, 2011, https://www.everydaychristian.com/blogs/post/the_public_and_private_ministry_of_the_word/.

The Dangers of Emphasizing Just One Side of the Two Personal Dimensions

Overlooking the macro aspect of pastoral counseling might result in the development of isolated pastoral counseling ministries disconnected from the church and other facets of pastoral responsibilities. This is noticeable within the present mainstream pastoral counseling movement, particularly among those in the Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) and licensure camp, where a disparity between the macro and micro dimensions of pastoral counseling is apparent. Simply put, counseling evolved into a ministry separate from the church. A parallel concern could arise within the BCM unless a theological framework enables biblical counselors to appreciate both aspects of personal ministry at the collective and individual levels.[9]

Within American Protestant churches, pastoral counseling has been understood in two different forms. First, pastoral counseling may refer to the ministry of an ordained pastor as one of several ministries under the umbrella of pastoral care. Second, pastoral counseling may also refer to a specialized ministry solely dedicated to counseling individuals outside the church. While the former aligns with traditional pastoral care, the latter emerged with the advent of the CPE movement in the early twentieth century. Pastoral counselors who work outside the church setting function as if they are in private practice, with only occasional contact with the ordaining body.[10] Moreover, after decades of conflict and compromise, the American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC) revised the bylaws in 2011 to remove the ordination requirement entirely. Thus, "pastoral" became a functional term linking religious and spiritual concerns to the mental health work of the religious "professionals." In the

[9] I do not have specific biblical counseling groups or churches in mind. However, as the movement gains more followers and potentially evolves into a profitable market, there is a concern that counseling practices neglecting church involvement could become theologically problematic.

[10] Holifield, *A History of Pastoral Care in America*, 227–31.

AAPC, the ecclesiastical tie between the church and the pastoral counselor, previously thought to be indissoluble, was completely broken.[11]

In contrast, David Powlison explains in "Familial Counseling" that biblical counseling ministry should be oriented through the paradigm of ministerial, pastoral, one-another, and family imageries. He asserts, "What makes these so different? For starters, they operate with an explicit God-reference. They subordinate the counselor to God, as first and foremost a 'counselee' (a fellow sheep, servant, peer, brother), rather than positing independent professional expertise."[12] Building on this perspective, I contend that without a solid theological vision or framework for understanding different dimensions of the personal ministry of the Word, biblical counseling risks devolving into an independent and commercialized professional counseling business like the mainstream pastoral counseling movement.

A potential concern within the biblical counseling movement is the presence of counseling professionals with solid soteriology who may need a comparable understanding of ecclesiology. This implies that pastors and biblical counselors could operate outside the broader ecclesiastical framework integral to pastoral and biblical counseling, akin to mainstream licensed pastoral counselors. It is crucial to emphasize that pastoral counseling, divorced from the communal structure of the church, loses its pastoral and biblical essence, as demonstrated in this dissertation's analysis.

Furthermore, neglecting the macro aspect of pastoral counseling may lead pastors to disregard their role as equippers of biblical counselors. I contend that pastors are fundamentally not just counselors but shepherds engaging in biblical counseling. It is essential to perceive pastoral counseling as an integral component of ecclesiological care

[11] Loren Townsend, "Pastoral Counseling's History," in *Understanding Pastoral Counseling*, ed. Elizabeth A. Maynard and Jill L. Snodgrass (New York: Springer, 2015), 32.

[12] David Powlison, "Familial Counseling: The Paradigm for Counselor-Counselee Relationships in 1 Thessalonians 5," *JBC* 25, no. 1 (2007): 5.

ministry, which requires the involvement of the entire church body. Pastors should not try to be the only counselors in the church but provide biblical counseling to their members employing both micro and macro approaches.

Authoritative: Biblical Uses of Pastoral Authority in Counseling

With David Powlison's groundbreaking article, "Crucial Issues in Contemporary Biblical Counseling," which emphasized mutual ministry in biblical counseling, the authoritative and confrontational aspect of pastoral counseling emphasized by Jay Adams has received less attention in more recent expressions of the BCM. Understandably, the next generation had to clarify the counseling relationship between the counselor and counselee because biblical counseling is more than directive and authoritative. As Powlison claims, "The biblical view of the counseling relationship has non-authoritative elements, in which 'counselee' sets the agenda, in which 'the relationship' is central to constructive counseling taking place! The Scripture demands that we probe the interplay between authority and mutuality characteristic of healthy biblical relationships."[13]

Those who followed Jay Adams's nouthetic model emphasized a professional and authoritative approach, aiming to underscore the lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of his Word in the counseling process. While they highlighted the importance of counseling with love, it was a firm and resolute love designed to lead sinners to repentance.[14] However, there has been a shift toward prioritizing the family model or paradigm to steer the movement away from the authoritative pastoral counseling model. This shift in the movement is commendable, considering that the initial generation's

[13] David Powlison, "Crucial Issues in Contemporary Biblical Counseling," *JPP* 9, no. 3 (1988): 65.

[14] Powlison summarized the Christian counselors' critique in a section titled "Adams's Insistence on the Primacy of the Preacher-as-Authoritative-Counselor" in *The Biblical Counseling Movement,* 178–82.

professional pastoral counseling model lacked emphasis on the familial and mutual counseling aspects, which are equally relevant within the church context. However, the biblical theology of the shepherding metaphor demonstrates that pastoral counseling carries both spiritual and ecclesiological authority, which Adams emphasized, that the movement must seriously reconsider.

In my perspective, the biblical theology expressed through the shepherding metaphor can reconcile the apparent tension between these different emphases on pastoral authority in counseling. The biblical theology of the shepherding metaphor introduces a form of pastoral counseling that encompasses both pastoral authority and compassion, which the BCM must acknowledge. Timothy Laniak helpfully explains the biblical-theological study of the shepherding metaphor in his book *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, asserting, "God is the ultimate Shepherd of his people. He calls human deputies to work for him, though at the risk that they presume prerogatives reserved for the Owner. To be a shepherd is to be both responsible for (the flock) and responsible to (the Owner)."[15] In essence, pastoral authority is delegated by the Good Shepherd, should accurately embody the Shepherd's intentions, and be utilized exclusively for the well-being of His flock. With this understanding, pastors should feel confident exercising compassionate pastoral authority to counsel the flock under their care.

Today, pastoral authority is often associated with coercive and authoritarian spiritual manipulation aimed at controlling church members. Observing the modern dynamics of spiritual abuse instigated by church pastors, Michael Kruger defines spiritual abuse in these words: "Spiritual abuse is when a spiritual leader—such as a pastor, elder, or head of a Christian organization—wields his position of spiritual authority in such a way that he manipulates, domineers, bullies, and intimidates those under him as a means

[15] Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible*, NSBT 20 (Leicester, England: Apollos, 2006), 248.

of maintaining his power and control, even if he is convinced he is seeking biblical and kingdom-related goals."[16]

Biblical pastoral authority, an authority granted to pastors and elders to seek and restore God's flock, is significantly different (John 10:11). It is not a dominating authority but rather a divine directive from God to human undershepherds, empowering them to compassionately seek out and tend to his sheep in their capacity as Christ's representatives (1 Pet 5:2–3). Edmund Clowney claims, "Because Christ's saving kingdom is spiritual, not temporal, the power given to the church must also be spiritual. The government of the church cannot use political sanctions or physical force (Matt 22:16–21; John 18:36–37; 2 Cor 10:3–6). Christian obedience to church rule is obedience in the Lord, for his Word governs the church, not the other way round."[17] Therefore, it is incumbent upon the members of God's flock to open their lives to pastoral care and counseling, recognizing and willingly submitting to the divine calling and authority vested in their shepherds (Heb 13:17). Consequently, the Biblical Counseling Movement must articulate a precise understanding of pastoral authority within pastoral counseling. The following points delineate theological and practical implications concerning the application of pastoral authority in counseling through five tasks of the shepherds: Knowing, Nurturing, Leading, Gathering, and Protecting.

The Pastoral Authority to Know the Flock through Counseling

Explaining his intimate connection with his flock, Jesus expressed, "I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own and my own know me" (John 10:14). In the biblical theology of shepherding, he is the Good Shepherd because he is the exemplar for all

[16] Michael J. Kruger, *Bully Pulpit: Confronting the Problem of Spiritual Abuse in the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2022), 24.

[17] Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church*, CCT (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 203.

human shepherds. Hence, it could be interpreted as "the Model Shepherd."[18] Following the Model Shepherd, pastors and elders must strive to *know* the sheep under their care to oversee them adequately (John 10:3).

Paul also teaches and models the importance of personally knowing the sheep in Acts 20:28–35. In this passage, Paul urges Ephesian elders to labor diligently in safeguarding God's flock from heretical doctrines that will eventually rise within the church by the proper teaching of the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). He states, "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." Here, Paul advises the elders to "pay careful attention" to themselves and to the entire flock to properly protect the sheep from heretical teachings that could potentially destroy God's sheep.

BDAG defines προσέχω (pay careful attention) as "to be in a state of alert, be concerned about, care for, take care." The word is used in Luke's writings to mean "be aware of" or "be careful of" (Luke 12:1; Acts 5:35). However, in the context of Acts 20:28, the word implies the concept of vigilant watchfulness and protection of the flock that requires personally knowing the flock.[19] The concept of personal knowledge of God's people conveyed through προσέχω is also found in Luke 17:2. In this verse, the word is employed to explain spiritual accountability between the church family. He states, "Pay attention (προσέχω) to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him." In this verse, προσέχω does not mean that one should be aware of or stay away from other Christians, but to pay careful attention to one another's heart and

[18] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 211.

[19] William Larkin explains the pastoral leadership that is explained in Acts 20:28 in these words: "Finally, in manner, this leadership will be serious, conscientious and intensely personal. . . . This passage can especially help us to recapture a coherent focus for leadership in local church ministry. As John Stott says, it will help us 'rehabilitate the noble word "pastors," who are shepherds of Christ's sheep, called to tend, feed, and protect them.'" William J. Larkin Jr., *Acts*, IVPNTC 5 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), 1995, 298, Logos.

life to protect one another from sin. So, as Darrell Bock explains, the verse assumes mutual accountability, which requires personal relationships since the church cannot adequately admonish one another without personal knowledge.[20]

The meaning of Paul's exhortation for the elders to "pay careful attention to the flock" (Acts 20:28) through personal relationship can also be drawn from his pastoral ministry modeled to the Ephesian elders found in the textual context of Acts 20. As Acts 20:20 and 31 indicate, Paul not only taught (διδάσκω) and admonished (νουθετέω) Ephesian Christians in public settings but also in personal settings. Paul carefully watched "all the flock" in the Ephesian church by making efforts to personally know them. In that sense, Paul not only taught the elders biblical shepherding through words alone but also modeled it by demonstrating pastoral ministry in both public and personal settings so that they may follow his example.

Pastors must recognize that Christ has given them the authority to familiarize themselves with the church members under their care. As Christ's representatives, they are authorized to actively engage with and understand the flock's circumstances, distress, suffering, and joy with the help of fellow elders and other mature church members. They are not required to wait for members to seek counseling in their offices or extend invitations for casual conversations over coffee. Pastors can take the initiative by personally asking questions like, "How are you doing? How is your family?" or suggesting, "Would you like to have lunch with me? I would love to learn more about how you are doing." Although it is impossible for a pastor to personally know every member of the congregation, the elder board should make creative and systematic efforts to become acquainted with the congregation as a pastoral team.

Admittedly, in a modern American society that highly values personal privacy, such inquiries from pastors might appear intrusive. However, God commands,

[20] Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, IVPNTC 3 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), s.v. "Gearing Up for Future Challenges (20:28–35)," Logos.

"Know well the condition of your flocks, and give attention to your herds" (Prov 27:23). Pastors and elders bear the responsibility and authority to know the members as Christ's authorized undershepherds.

For a pastor to know his flock also includes knowing the sins of his church members. Since shepherds must restore a sheep straying from the righteous path, they must carefully observe their sheep and understand the sins that beset them. Formally searching for a flock's problem(s) is a special authority given to the pastors since it is not wise or biblical for lay Christians to look for others' sins. Although each member should graciously confront and exhort one another as opportunities arise, they should not formally search for the flock's sin (Gal 6:10; 2 Thess 3:11). Concerning this, Adams explains, "To these official church counselors, who are required by God to counsel as a part of their office (or work), God has given a heavier burden and a broader authority that corresponds to it. As a result, they must do what the layman is forbidden to do: they must search out problems among the members of the church in order to nip them in the bud."[21]

However, while acquainting themselves with the congregation, pastors must be cautious not to wield their pastoral authority and position to unearth the wrongdoings of church members. This caution is echoed in Paul's admonition to the elders to "pay careful attention to *yourselves* and all the flock" (Acts 20:28). Before getting to know others, pastors should be mindful of their own heart condition. As a warning, Kruger explains the psychology of pastors who abuse their authority: "In his mind, he is so significant to the kingdom's work, so important, so valuable that he feels justified in doing nearly anything to keep that ministry on track. If people get run over, then that's because they got in the way of the great kingdom work he's doing—collateral damage, so to speak. In a sick, twisted way, he is crushing people for the glory of God."[22]

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[21] Jay E. Adams, *Ready to Restore: An Introductory Guide to Christian Counseling* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2021), 16.

[22] Kruger, *Bully Pulpit*, 34.

David Peterson emphasizes, "Christian leaders cannot adequately care for others if they neglect the care and nurture of themselves (cf. 1 Tim. 4:16)."[23] Tim Lane urges pastors to assess their heart conditions before seeking to understand other members in the church:

> God has ordained that this person be in your life. The first pastoral exercise is paying attention to the common temptations to sin that different kinds of difficult people post to you; borderline, angry and oblivious, or manic-depressive. You will be tempted to want to overpower, appease, and avoid them. You will likely move typically in one of these directions or bounce back and forth between those three in an effort to get some relief. You end up, if you are not carefully attending to your own heart, sinfully responding to the difficulty that the difficult person is bringing into your life. If you do this, how then, you can call this person to respond to life in godly ways when you aren't even responding to life (them) in godly ways? This, by the way, is true of any relationship.[24]

Pastors should conscientiously examine their hearts to prevent becoming overly intrusive or assuming the role of moral authorities. In line with Thomas Oden's assertion, they should recognize the authority to understand the flock as a *ministry of listening*.[25] A pastor's authority to acquaint himself with his members through active listening and shared life experiences is a privilege bestowed by the Chief Shepherd. Rather than viewing it as a source of complaint or burden, pastors should embrace it as an honor to become acquainted with the joys and sorrows of church members.

However, as Oden helpfully highlights, parishioners will be reluctant to share their lives with pastors unless they have "confidence in the office and the person of the minister."[26] This trust is primarily cultivated through consistent and reliable interactions between the pastor and his flock. When pastors model the traits of the Good Shepherd in word and deed and demonstrate genuine love and care for the flock, members will

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[23] David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 568.

[24] Timothy S. Lane, "Counseling in the Local Church: The Pastor as Shepherd and Equipper" (DMin thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary, 2006), 218.

[25] Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 202–3.

[26] Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 203.

willingly open their hearts and lives, allowing pastors to understand their struggles and sufferings (Heb 13:7; 1 Tim 4:12; 1 Pet 5:3). The effective exercise of pastoral authority to know the flock hinges on trust and respect for the pastor. In this context, biblical pastoral authority differs from institutional authority, which tends to be coercive and controlling (Matt 20:25–28).

Significant challenges in pastoral ministry emerge when pastors lack awareness of their congregations' difficulties, potentially creating a divide between the flock and the shepherd. It is unsettling to consider that some members might be dealing with severe depression or navigating relational conflicts while the pastor unknowingly delivers sermons on the peace of God and all being well. For this reason, pastors should make efforts to stay attuned to any mental health concerns and sin struggles their flock may be enduring. The session or elder board should proactively work together with mature members of the church to know and understand God's flock under their care by paying "careful attention to themselves and all the flock" (Acts 20:28).

The Pastoral Authority to Nurture the Flock through Counseling

In their capacity as authorized undershepherds of Christ in the church, pastors are also entrusted with the authority to personally proclaim the Word of God within the lives of their congregation. This authority includes counseling that sustains those who are spiritually famished by speaking into their lives through biblical encouragement, exhortation, and guidance to foster growth (Col 1:28; 2 Tim 2:15; Titus 2:15). Additionally, pastors possess the authority to speak God's gracious truth to help the flock to experience spiritual healing (Ps 107:20; 119:50; 1 Pet 2:24; Jas 5:14–15). John Murray notes,

> We fail too often to calculate the extent to which the spirits of the people of God are wounded and broken. The factors creating such a state of heart and mind are many and diverse. It is of the paramount function of the eldership to strengthen the weak

> hands and confirm the feeble knees, to say to them who are of the fearful heart, "Be strong!" and to be the instruments of binding up the broken-hearted.[27]

It is important to emphasize that this authority does not mean intruding on someone's privacy or imposing uninvited counsel. Instead, it encapsulates the shepherd's role in nurturing those who are spiritually hungry and hurting through the personal ministry of the Word. In that sense, pastoral authority serves as a divine mandate to engage with the congregation's spiritual needs, addressing hunger, promoting growth, and facilitating healing through compassionate Christ-centered counsel.[28]

The understanding of spiritual nurturing and healing in the Christian counseling community has changed in recent decades due to the impact of Rogerian psychology, which emphasizes an internal source of healing centered on self-acceptance.[29] Helen Thorne and Steve Midgley helpfully describe the Rogerian therapy model: "Through providing a positive, accepting and empathic relationship, person-centered counseling gives a context in which people flourish. They can get in touch with their true selves and realise their potential, becoming the best version of themselves that they can be. People don't need guidance or direction to achieve this (hence 'non-directive' counselling)—they just require an affirming environment."[30] In Roger's client-centered psychotherapeutic model, a theory widely adopted in the mainstream pastoral

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[27] John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1976), 1:266–67.

[28] Christ is the ultimate nurturer of our souls. Any assertions of alternative solutions are inaccurate and in direct competition with Christ. According to the Confessional Statement of the Biblical Counseling Coalition, biblical counselors "affirm that numerous sources (such as scientific research, organized observations about human behavior, those we counsel, reflection on our own life experience, literature, film, and history) can contribute to our knowledge of people, and many sources can contribute some relief for the troubles of life. However, none can constitute a comprehensive system of counseling principles and practices. When systems of thought and practice claim to prescribe a cure for the human condition, they compete with Christ (Colossians 2:1–15)." Biblical Counseling Coalition, "BCC Confessional Statement," last modified July 2018, https://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/confessional-statement/.

[29] Refer to Carl R. Rogers, *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy*, 50th anniv. ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1995, 17; Carl R. Rogers, *Client-Centered Therapy: Its Current Practice, Implications, and Theory*, Houghton Mifflin Psychological Series (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1951).

[30] Steve Midgley and Helen Thorne, *Mental Health and Your Church: A Handbook for Biblical Care* (Epsom, Surrey, England: Good Book, 2023), 64.

counseling movement, the pastor's role is predominantly that of a listener rather than a speaker.[31] The practice of quietly listening to a counselee while posing thoughtful questions is widely recognized as a virtue in pastoral counseling that promotes inner healing.

In the biblical theology of shepherding, pastors are empowered to understand the flock through attentive listening; however, they are also granted the authority to impart guidance and encouragement into the lives of Christians for their spiritual edification (1 Thess 5:12–13; 2 Tim 4:2). For this reason, pastors should not be afraid to personally teach the gospel to the sheep while counseling or through casual conversations. As Stephan van der Watt explained through his historical examination of Martin Bucer and John Calvin's pastoral theology, "Pastors are called to teach believers and seekers alike how to live a life devoted to God (piously), and as a result how to flourish (happily). But even before pastors can attempt to teach this art, they must faithfully strive to embody it themselves."[32] In other words, pastors can only adequately feed and nurture the flock when they are nurtured by Christ through communion with him. M. Craig Barnes explains the goal of pastoral counseling: "to witness the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing people back to life through their union in Christ."[33] Once again, this balanced understanding of authority in pastoral counseling reminds us that "to be a shepherd is to be both responsible for (the flock) and responsible to (the Owner)."[34]

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[31] Refer to the following resources to see the Rogerian impact on mainstream pastoral counseling of the twentieth century: Wayne E. Oates, *Protestant Pastoral Counseling* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962); Steward Hiltner, *Pastoral Counseling* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1949).

[32] Stephan Van der Watt, "Wholehearted Commitment to Sound Pastoral Theology and Care: What Martin Bucer and John Calvin Can Teach Today's Pastors," *Calvin Theological Journal* 56, no. 2 (November 2021): 251.

[33] M. Craig Barnes, "The Misson of God in Pastoral Care and Counseling," in *What Is Jesus Doing? God's Activity in the Life and Work of the Church*, ed. Edwin Chr. van Driel (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 133.

[34] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 248.

The Pastoral Authority to Lead the Flock through Counseling

The Good Shepherd leads his flock "in paths of righteousness for his name's sake" (Ps 23:4). Similarly, his undershepherds bear the authority and responsibility to lead those entrusted to their care to the destination desired by the Good Shepherd. The shepherd's leadership within the church operates on both corporate and individual levels. On the corporate scale, pastoral activities encompass making pastoral decisions regarding ministry as the shepherds of the church (Acts 6:2-4; Eph 4:11-12). On the individual level, the pastor leads each member through personal godliness and counseling. Pastors should not insist that their members adhere to what they consider proper but rather guide them in aligning with the standards set by Christ, the Chief Shepherd. Michael Wilder and Timothy Jones explain, "The power that a leader exercises is not the leader's but Christ's; the truth that the leader is called to proclaim is not the leader's vision but God's revelation; and the position to which the leader is called is not sovereignty over the community but stewardship within the community, submitted to the leadership of Christ."[35]

The objective of God's divine shepherding is to address all the needs of his sheep according to his terms. This includes rescuing them from sin and leading them to become more like Christ. Pastors must possess a profound understanding of God's revealed truth and the ability to apply its teachings to help members become more like Christ during circumstances of hardship and suffering. This approach provides emotional relief and helps the flock grow spiritually into the likeness of Christ, aligning with the goal of biblical counseling.

Another aspect of pastoral leading through counseling is equipping the counselees to become servant leaders or lay shepherds capable of caring for others. God desires the sheep to grow into spiritual maturity. In that sense, pastoral counseling should

[35] Michael S. Wilder and Timothy Paul Jones, *The God Who Goes before You: Pastoral Leadership as Christ-Centered Followership* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2018), 3.

aim to help the counselee to be at a place of service to others by the end of counseling. Wilder and Jones's definition of Christian leadership is insightful in understanding this concept of leadership: "The Christ-following leader—living as a bearer of God's image in union with Christ and his people—develops a diverse community of fellow laborers who are equipped and empowered to pursue shared goals that fulfill the creation mandate and the Great Commission in submission to the Word of God."[36]

Pastors are entrusted with the authority to guide the flock through God's Word. They have the power to speak into their lives and direct them toward God's ultimate purpose, which is to mirror the character of the Good Shepherd, their Lord and Savior. Eric Johnson explains this ultimate goal in counseling and life:

> What unites these dual goals is the conformity of believers into the image of Christ. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the image of God (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15), the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of God's nature (Heb 1:3). All humans were created in God's image, but this is a developmental goal as well as a feature of human nature, and human sin damaged the image, causing fallen humans to resemble God much less than is God's design. As the Real Man, Christ is the human ideal, so he is the Form toward which human beings are supposed to be moving.[37]

This goal holds critical theological implications as it signifies the restoration of God's image in Christians as the goal of pastoral care. Put differently, pastors bear the responsibility and authority to steer the lives of Christians toward God's intended purpose, guiding them in their journey to more closely resemble Christ, the Good Shepherd. Even though such exhortations may momentarily cause sorrow, the congregation should humbly allow their shepherds to freely speak God's Word into their lives because Christ gave them the authority to lead (2 Cor 7:9–10; Heb 12:11; 13:17).

Pastors must not misuse their authority in guiding the congregation for personal gain or to exert dominance over their lives (1 Pet 5:1–15). Biblical authority is intended for service rather than to exercise control over others. Thomas Oden explains

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[36] Wilder and Jones, *The God Who Goes before You*, 16.

[37] Eric L. Johnson, *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 28.

the concept of the biblical authority of pastors as a paradox, calling it "leadership as service." He explains,

> The proper authority of ministry is not an external, manipulative, alien power that distances itself from those "under" it, but rather a legitimized and happily received influence that wishes only good for its recipient, a leadership that boldly guides but only on the basis of a deeply emphatic sense of what the flock yearns for and needs. The analogy of shepherd was not promiscuously or thoughtlessly chosen by Jesus as the centerpiece of ministry, but wells up from the heart of God's ministry to the world.[38]

In other words, the shepherd's leadership should be profoundly relational and compassionate (Isa 40:11; Acts 20:20, 31). Powlison underscores the importance of counseling with the mindset of a spiritual family member who recognizes the sins of others and acknowledges their own sin. He argues that pastoral and familial metaphors orient visions of biblical counseling at an equal level: "The ministerial, pastoral, one-anothering, and familial paradigms intend to function as primary and orienting visions. They should not be seen as subordinate analogies or mere metaphors in service to other dominant paradigm."[39] Pastors must conduct counseling with a familial paradigm in mind, knowing that they are also sufferers, saints, and sinners like their counselees. Therefore, pastors must approach pastoral counseling with humility and love, demonstrating enduring patience.

The Pastoral Authority to Gather the Flock through Counseling

Chapter 2 explored the realization of Old Testament prophecies regarding God gathering his people, which was achieved through Jesus Christ (Ezek 34:12; Isa 40:11; Jer 23:3; John 10:3–4, 16). Within this biblical-theological framework, Jesus proclaimed, "The Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10 NRSV). He ultimately accomplished the gathering of his people through his death and resurrection,

[38] Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 53.

[39] Powlison, "Familial Counseling," 6.

establishing a new unified flock in him (Gal 3:28; Eph 4:4–6; Rom 12:4–5). This ministry of gathering is also entrusted to the pastors; as Laniak claims, "The instruction of Jesus empowers his undershepherds to join him in gathering the lost and healing."[40]

In the context of pastoral counseling ministry, the ministry of gathering applies to two distinct ministry situations: those who have strayed and those who are lost or perishing. I contend that it is appropriate to perceive the ministry to "the strayed" as counseling involving exhortation and discipline, while the ministry directed to "the lost and perishing" should be understood within the framework of evangelistic counseling. Both scenarios fall into what Powlison would characterize as "outside the fence" or "the boundary of life" situations.[41] I assert that while the strayed necessitate authoritative counseling, the lost require evangelistic biblical counseling.[42]

First, the evangelistic aspect of pastoral counseling explicitly addresses the needs of the lost and perishing. Despite the tendency of many pastors to overlook their calling for evangelism outside of the pulpit, the Bible unequivocally directs Christian leaders, including pastors, to actively engage in this vital work. A case in point is Paul's instruction to Timothy: "Do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim 4:5). As Matt Queen argues, pastors should not limit their evangelistic efforts to public preaching alone, but they should also acknowledge that in the New Testament, Jesus, Peter, Philip, and Paul all engaged in evangelism through their public preaching and personal conversations.[43] Robert Jones's four different opportunities for evangelistic counseling from "Biblical

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[40] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 186.

[41] Powlison, "Crucial Issues in Contemporary Biblical Counseling," 69.

[42] Although Powlison does not touch upon evangelistic counseling in "Crucial Issues," I believe it is necessary to understand that among the lost, there is a predestined flock of God that needs to be saved from perishing. Thus, the pastors should be interested in gathering God's lost sheep. "Seeking the Lost and Perishing" by Matt Queen presents a helpful introduction to the pastoral ministry of evangelism by analyzing the biblical theology of shepherding. See Matt Queen, "Seeking the Lost and Perishing," in *Pastoral Ministry: The Ministry of a Shepherd*, ed. Deron J. Biles, Treasury of Baptist Theology (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2017).

[43] Queen, "Seeking the Lost and Perishing," 147.

Counseling: An Opportunity for Problem-Based Evangelism" could serve as a helpful guide to understanding evangelistic counseling: (1) informal counseling with any unchurched people who are suffering; (2) formal opportunities to counsel non-Christians who make an appointment with the pastor; (3) a church member who is not yet saved; and (4) followers of the Lord who may have lack of assurance in salvation.[44] Pastors have various opportunities to employ pastoral counseling ministry to bring people to Christ, the Good Shepherd.

Moreover, as authorized leaders in the church responsible for training and equipping all members for active involvement in the Great Commission, pastors must serve as models of evangelistic work (Matt 28:18–20; Eph 4:11–12). Pastors should not only engage in evangelizing unbelievers through biblical counseling but also disciple church members and encourage them to apply biblical counseling methods for evangelism. Counseling is a powerful avenue for delivering the gospel message to those who have yet to embrace faith.[45] Jay Adams claimed that "evangelism, like other Christian tasks, must be taught by discipleship (or modeling) method, and the pastor is the principal (though not sole) teacher/model."[46] In this context, pastors are to exemplify a life of evangelism as they exercise their authority to motivate, mobilize, and train church members to participate in the ministry of evangelism through biblical counseling.

Second, the pastoral authority to gather includes counseling those who have strayed. Traditionally, this refers to the remedial or restorative counseling that requires church discipline. According to Adams, it is the responsibility of every church member to try to restore (through one-on-one counseling) a member who has broken Christian unity

[44] Robert D. Jones, "Biblical Counseling: An Opportunity for Problem-Based Evangelism," *JBC* 31, no. 1 (2017): 76–78.

[45] Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock*, 468–99.

[46] Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock*, 469.

or committed sin against Christ.[47] Tim Lane refers to this type of discipline as "unsought one-on-one counseling," which involves uninvited counseling aimed at bringing a sinner back to Christ and his church. Pastors, as shepherds, should take an active role in restoring strayed sheep through "unsought one-on-one counseling."

Furthermore, as Christ taught in Matthew 18:16, there is another informal aspect of church discipline in which one or two individuals approach the offender to provide biblical counsel and seek restoration. Lane describes this as "unsought group counseling" that requires "redemptive effort to rescue a sinner who is blinded and hardened by sin."[48] Pastors could play a vital role in this informal discipline by assisting lay counselors in providing biblical counseling that speaks truth in love to the sinner and seeks their restoration to Christ. Unsought counseling significantly differs from most counseling scenarios, in which the process usually begins with an invitation or expressed desire for counsel from the church members.

Given the complexity of unsought group counseling, which can sometimes result in unfavorable outcomes, pastors must exercise extra caution when getting involved. The difficulty could be minimized when the pastor faithfully works in both components of church discipline, preventative and corrective (or restorative), with the help of the church members following the church discipline procedure laid out in Matthew 18.[49] The two dimensions of church discipline, preventative and corrective, can also be addressed through macro and micro counseling initiatives led by pastors. Pastors can equip church members to graciously confront those engaged in sin through informal counseling, forming a preventive aspect of church discipline ministry. Meanwhile, pastors can concentrate on the formal corrective ministries.

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[47] Jay E. Adams, *Handbook of Church Discipline: A Right and Privilege of Every Church Member* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 45–54.

[48] Lane, "Counseling in the Local Church," 223.

[49] Lane, "Counseling in the Local Church," 227.

Although a comprehensive discussion of the two components of church discipline is beyond the scope of this section, it is pertinent to briefly touch upon pastoral counseling, specifically within the context of the third step in the church discipline process, given its relevance to the issue of authority.[50] For instance, how should we understand corrective pastoral counseling, where the pastor must exercise ecclesiastical authority to demand repentance from an offender and can employ disciplinary measures if the individual refuses to heed? This concept may seem foreign in today's culture, saturated within a secular psychotherapeutic culture that emphasizes unconditional acceptance. In his book, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God's Love,* Jonathan Leeman offers valuable insights into church authority, helping shape a biblical perspective on church discipline. Leeman acknowledges the prevalent mistrust of authority, given its frequent misuse in our generation, and presents a unique perspective based on Christ's life, death, and resurrection, depicting Christ as a sacrificing King for his people. Leeman's compelling argument posits that the church, as a new reality, is established through Christ's authority. Submitting to the church, especially as it proclaims Christ's Word, becomes a tangible expression of practical submission to Christ.[51] In this theological context, pastoral authority to restore wayward sheep is not an act of coercion but an expression of Christ's love through the church, aiming to guide them back to the Good Shepherd.

[50] The third step of the church discipline process refers to the involvement of the church leadership: "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church" (Matt 18:17). While there are helpful books addressing the subject of church discipline, the BCM should consider publishing manuals and handbooks that explicitly guide the implementation of biblical counseling for both components. Also, in line with this dissertation, the churches will appreciate pastoral counseling throughout the process. For church discipline related contents, refer to books such as Adams, *Handbook of Church Discipline*; Robert K. Cheong, *God Redeeming His Bride: A Handbook for Church Discipline* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2012); Jonathan Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God's Love: Reintroducing the Doctrines of Church Membership and Discipline*, 9Marks (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2010).

[51] Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God's Love*, 127–68.

The Pastoral Authority to Protect the Flock through Counseling

In his parting words to the Ephesian elders, Paul issued a cautionary message: "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 20:29–30). Paul's warning highlights that those who threaten the purity and unity of God's community can come from without and from within. Ezekiel 34:17–19 similarly warns about a corrupt flock that does not belong to the Lord, trampling down the pasture and polluting the water meant for his sheep. In essence, disruptions within the church community often originate from those within. For this reason, the Lord calls his undershepherds to protect his sheep from the wolves that come to devour them. However, for various reasons, few pastors employ their authority and the personal ministry of the Word to protect their sheep.

Some pastors refrain from exercising their authority to protect due to apprehensions about confronting the wrongdoer. Others might neglect employing their authority because they lack a sufficient understanding of the issue's complexities. For this reason, Witmer warns the pastors, "Where are the shepherds who should have been paying attention to the flock and especially those who strayed from the community of the faithful? These are sheep for whom shepherd-elders will have to give account to the Chief Shepherd one day."[52]

How, then, should pastors wield their authority to protect the flock from wolves and the predators within? When contemplating the protective dimension of pastoral ministry, our thoughts often turn to the concepts of formal church discipline toward unrepentant members. However, as Powlison argued, formal church discipline is reserved as the final stage to restore wayward church members.[53] Therefore, it is not a

[52] Witmer, *The Shepherd Leader*, 177.

[53] Powlison, "Crucial Issues in Contemporary Biblical Counseling," 65–70.

routine mode of pastoral ministry. The more prevalent approach to pastoral protection is through informal counseling or pastoral inquiry about an area of concern. In this regard, it is crucial to acknowledge that the pastoral duty of protection should primarily function in the church as a preventative measure, even though corrective measures may be necessary. In undertaking this responsibility, the pastor should employ his authority as the appointed teacher and theologian of the congregation, as asserted by Malcolm Yarnell:

> Through the proclamation of the Word of God to the people of God, the Christian leader fulfills his role as a shepherd, and the congregation to which he is temporally responsible will recognize his authority only in that Word. The Christian shepherd's role may be summarized as that of caring for the congregation (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2–4), seeking the little ones who have become lost (Matt 18:10–14), and combatting heretical teachings in the flock (Acts 20:29–30). In each of these three metaphorical cases . . . the shepherd operates literally through teaching a theological message from the Word of God.[54]

While the teachings of the gospel and orthodox doctrines are typically communicated in public forums such as sermons and lectures, pastors can also convey them through pastoral counseling to safeguard their congregation. Addressing individuals who promote heretical teachings through confrontational pastoral counseling can be likened to employing the ministry of the rod and staff against wolves. Adams contends that dealing with spiritual wolves should align with the guidance of Psalm 23—utilizing the rod and staff.[55] In contrast to the spiritual predator causing spiritual harm in the church, the Word serves as the rod and staff and brings comfort, clarity, and correction to the sheep facing spiritual attacks and false teachings (Ps 23:4; John 10:27).

Pastors should not neglect the ministry of the rod and staff, for it protects the sheep and is a significant way to ensure their spiritual safety and well-being. John Murray notes,

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[54] Malcolm Yarnell III, "The Shepherd Who Protects the Sheep," in Biles, *Pastoral Ministry*, 115.

[55] Jay E. Adams, *Acts: The Christian Counselor's Commentary* (Hackettstown, NJ: Timeless Texts, 1994), 133.

> How much of purity and peace would have been maintained in the church of Christ and will be maintained if elders are sensitive to the first steps of delinquency on the part of the people and bring the word of tender admonition and reproof to bear upon them before they reach the by-paths of open and censurable sin! A shepherd when he sees a sheep wandering does not wait until it reaches the well-nigh inaccessible precipices.[56]

Pastors engaging in biblical counseling with the congregation, whether formally or informally, use it as a proactive measure to prevent the sheep from succumbing to erroneous teachings. Since wolves may infiltrate the flock, potentially causing confusion and conflicts, pastors must remain vigilant as shepherds authorized by Christ.

John Frame asserts, "The church consists of those who have been conquered by God's saving power, who are now enlisted in the warfare of God's kingdom against the kingdom of Satan. Those who do not voluntarily give allegiance to God's kingdom will be conquered by God's judgment and, eventually, destroyed by his power."[57] The protective ministry of the undershepherds operates on the same theological principle: those who are part of Christ's flock will heed the admonition, repent, and experience restoration. However, those who remain aligned with the kingdom of Satan must face appropriate discipline.

Recognizing they do not have omniscient knowledge of their church, pastors must remain vigilant for the spread of heretical teachings within the church community. Moreover, God has provided other mature Christians in the church who can offer support to pastors; well-equipped lay biblical counselors can play a crucial role in helping pastors protect the congregation from potential spiritual dangers. As Adams recommends, lay biblical counselors should alert elders to protect the flock from potential danger, as spiritual wolves can wreak havoc on congregations if given any leeway (Titus 3:10).[58]

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[56] Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray*, 1:266.

[57] John M. Frame, "The Doctrine of the Church," in *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013), Kindle.

[58] Adams, *Acts: The Christian Counselor's Commentary*, 133.

Therefore, pastors must prioritize training biblical counselors within the church and actively involve them in the shepherding ministry. Once more, this underscores why pastors should not just serve as biblical counselors but also equip others to be biblical counselors.

Finally, the shepherd's authority to protect the sheep must include those in physical and spiritual danger within the church. While these problems could be classified under the broader umbrella of conflict, my focus is specifically on cases of abuse. Defining abuse is difficult. Jeremy Pierre and Greg Wilson explain that "abuse is a sin that affects personhood, as God designed it."[59] They posit that domestic abuse extends beyond physical dimensions. It has spiritual implications because when an individual's capacity to think and act is hindered through constant manipulations and violence by another person, the offender is not only sinning against God's creation but also inflicting profound spiritual harm on the victim, impeding their ability to function as the image of God.[60]

In recent days, the BCM has addressed domestic abuse wisely,[61] but there is a need for additional resources on pastoral counseling related to abuse. Concerning the church's response to abuse, contributors to Brad Hambrick's *Becoming a Church that Cares Well for the Abused* warn the church: "If we are naïve to this reality, then instead of being shepherds who protect God's children, we can easily and unintentionally become part of the problem, prioritizing the wrong initial responses."[62] Developing practical resources for pastors and the church for conducting trauma counseling and care

[59] Jeremy Pierre and Greg Wilson, *When Home Hurts: A Guide for Responding Wisely to Domestic Abuse in Your Church* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2021), 39.

[60] Pierre and Wilson, *When Home Hurts*, 40–41.

[61] Refer to ACBC, "Committed to Care: Statement on Abuse and Biblical Counseling," accessed July 19, 2023, https://abuse.biblicalcounseling.com/.

[62] Cited in Brad Hambrick, *Becoming a Church That Cares Well for the Abused: Handbook* (Nashville: B & H, 2019), 4–5.

for the victim could be extremely beneficial. Practical manuals for wise confrontation strategies for the oppressor could be helpful. Exploring the concept of secondary victimization by the church and pastors toward survivors is another subject requiring further development.

As Diane Langberg asserts, "When we fail to serve the abused and oppressed, we fail to follow our Head. A body that does not follow its head is a sick body. When we turn from those who have been abused—in our midst or elsewhere—we have chosen to value something else more than love and obedience to our God. We are called by God to care for those who are afflicted and needy; to tend broken hearts and to release the captives."[63] Following the example of the Good Shepherd, pastors and elders of the church are called to risk their comfort and security if necessary to save the sheep from any danger (John 10:11). To accomplish this, they need to develop a better understanding of how abusers function, the harm they inflict, and the ability to apply the good news in a manner that saves and restores the victims.

Pluralistic: Pastoral Counseling as a Team

Unlike many counseling methods that emphasize individualistic approaches, biblical pastoral counseling adopts a pluralistic or team practice. This does not necessarily imply the involvement of multiple pastors and elders in a single counseling session for an individual seeking counsel. Instead, it underscores the presence of pastoral accountability and collaborative efforts in attending to the needs of those seeking guidance. While one or two pastoral counselors may take the lead in counseling sessions, it is essential for other elders to know about the formal counseling matters being addressed, enabling them to share the wisdom and support required to serve individuals following biblical principles.

[63] Hambrick, *Becoming a Church That Cares Well for the Abused*, 9.

As discussed in the previous chapters, the Bible introduces pastoral care that embraces the plurality of elders as a biblical principle in serving God's flock. Grudem asserts,

> Two significant conclusions may be drawn from this survey of the New Testament evidence. First, no passage suggests that any church, no matter how small, had only one elder. The consistent New Testament pattern is a plurality of elders "in every church" (Acts 14:23) and "in every town" (Titus 1:5). Second, we do not see a diversity of forms of government in the New Testament church, but a unified and consistent pattern in which every church had elders governing it and keeping watch over it (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17; 1 Peter 5:2–3).[64]

It is clear from the NT survey that the plurality of elders was a common practice within the early churches, even though the exact form of church government cannot be determined with certainty. Hence, it is crucial to apply this theological practice to pastoral counseling.[65]

In this context, I see two practical advantages to having multiple elders involved in pastoral counseling. First, the shared practice of pastoral counseling introduces the team ministry component to the personal ministry of the Word. William Larkin claims in his exposition on Acts 20:28, "Christian elders are always referred to in the plural by Luke (11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 23; 20:17). In a day when individualism, monarchial authoritarianism, or simple economic necessity turns the pastoral role into a "one-man show," we would do well to consider, no matter our polity, how we may promote teamwork in the pastoring of the local flock."[66]

Adams highlights that pastoral counseling ministries frequently encounter situations where the demands surpass the capacity of a single pastor. Consequently, pastors should impart training to other elders within the church, fostering their

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[64] Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 913.

[65] As was discussed, the plurality of elders has a long tradition starting from Exodus. Refer to pages 133–35 of this dissertation.

[66] Larkin, *Acts*, 299.

involvement in pastoral counseling to distribute the workload and collectively shepherd God's flock.[67] Empowering elders to train lay counselors further lightens the load. This collaborative approach allows the church to address counseling demands effectively as a unified team.

Does this imply that every elder in the church must offer biblical counseling to the congregation? The answer is affirmative, though the extent of participation may differ based on their individual gifts and roles within the church. As Lawrence R. Eyres insightfully points out, one of the shared responsibilities of all elders is to "minister the Word to, and pray with, the members of the church individually."[68] While certain elders may be specifically assigned to preach the Word regularly, the overarching duty for all elders is to engage in the personal ministry of the Word as caretakers of God's flock. This aligns with Paul's directive to Timothy that an elder must be apt to teach (1 Tim 3:2). However, it is crucial to acknowledge that not all elders possess the same proficiency in counseling, as not everyone is equipped and called for the regular teaching of the Word on the Lord's Day. Some elders are more gifted in counseling than others, as Eyres asserts: "Some elders are gifted as personal counsellors and sought out by those in the church who are weighed down with problems. This is especially true with those men who show ability in working with young people. In this area too, let those who appear to have the gifts be urged to prepare themselves."[69] It is crucial for the senior or lead pastor to motivate all elders to participate in some capacity in biblical counseling ministries, while also encouraging those with a particular gift in counseling to take on more prominent roles within the ministry.

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[67] Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock*, 187.

[68] Lawrence R. Eyres, *The Elders of the Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1980), 65.

[69] Eyres, *The Elders of the Church*, 67. It should be mentioned that Jay Adams wrote the preface of Eyres's book.

Incorporating the entire elder team into biblical counseling ministry enhances efficiency, meeting the growing demand for counseling in the church and pooling collective wisdom to offer sound advice. Most crucially, it establishes accountability, safeguarding against potential misconduct or abuse that may occur in the confidentiality of the counseling ministry. By encouraging elders to disclose their engagement and progress in counseling with the shepherding team, fellow elders can assume roles as accountability partners. Beyond offering admonishment and cautionary guidance to those who may deviate from biblical counseling principles, they can also assign another elder to be present in counseling sessions that could lead to sexual misconduct or unethical behavior.[70]

What impact does the sharing and discussion of counseling cases by the elders have on the confidentiality agreement in counseling? First, confidentiality must be respected, as it is a biblical principle that will be elaborated upon. According to Craig Meissner's observation of the NT, privacy and confidentiality were respected, needed, and in line with the gospel ministry.[71] For example, his brief survey explains that in Matthew 6, Jesus advises his followers to pray privately without drawing attention. In Matthew 18, he guides his disciples to deal with a sinning brother by addressing the issue personally and privately first before involving a few others, rather than immediately sharing it with the entire church. In John 8, Jesus forgives a sinful woman after her accusers leave. Jesus, on Holy Thursday, did not openly reveal Judas's betrayal or murderous intent. He generally avoided openly discussing people's sins. Similarly, Paul warns against being nosy, urging people to focus on their own affairs. Since faith relies on God and love shows through faith, it is best not to meddle in others' business (1 Thess

[70] Concerning this, Adams teaches there should be at least two elders when counseling a female counselee or premarital counseling. Adams, *Shepherding*, 188.

[71] Craig Meissner, "The Seal of the Confessional and Maintenance of Confidentiality in Pastoral Practice," *Logia* 20, no. 3 (2011): 26–27.

4:1). Lastly, James encourages confessing sins to "one another," but this does not necessarily mean openly confessing in all situations (Jas 5:16). It may refer to privately confessing sins to one another.[72] Concerning confidentiality in counseling, George Scipione argues that although the word confidentiality does not appear in the Bible, "The Bible speaks of privacy, secrecy, faithfulness, and loyalty. It gives us three concepts relating to this issue: confidentiality is part of loving your neighbor as yourself; there are exceptions to this general rule of confidentiality; and confidentiality in the case of these exceptions involves the confidant in sin."[73]

How can pastors and elders effectively collaborate as a team in biblical counseling ministry, ensuring the confidentiality of counselees is upheld and trust is preserved? Recognizing that the biblical concept of confidentiality is not absolute but somewhat limited can provide them with a biblical framework to navigate the issues that may arise (Matt 18:15–17). However, even within secular counseling, maintaining absolute confidentiality is challenging, as there are instances where mental health providers must report cases to the authorities.

Matthew 18 offers practical guidance for church discipline, serving as a valuable reference. For instance, when an elder or a member informally addresses an offender to guide them toward repentance, there is no immediate obligation to report the case to the elders. However, if the offender persists in unrepentance, the counselor should share the case with a select few (Matt 18:16) and approach the individual again, seeking restoration through repentance. Until this stage, the approach is considered "informal counseling." Hence, if the individual remains unrepentant, the counselor should report the case to the elders, marking the transition to "formal" counseling. The fundamental principle is that unless counseling reaches the "formal" stage, there is no obligation to

[72] Meissner, "The Seal of the Confessional and Maintenance of Confidentiality in Pastoral Practice," 26–27.

[73] George C. Scipione, "The Limits of Confidentiality in Counseling," *JPP* 7, no. 2 (1984): 29.

share the case details with the elder board. This approach aligns with the biblical principles outlined in Matthew 18.

Pastors and elders are not obligated to share every intricacy discussed in counseling sessions. While the Bible teaches the importance of honesty and openness, the reality of living in a fallen world necessitates a degree of privacy and discretion as ways to protect and love the counselee.[74] For instance, revealing the details of a counselee's childhood sexual abuse to the elder board or pastoral staff team may be unnecessary unless the individual is using their past experiences as a justification for present sinful behavior that warrants disciplinary action. If the counselee is searching for solace from past wounds, then maintaining confidentiality and avoiding sharing the details with other leaders is wiser and more compassionate. The following principles listed by Scipione may serve as a helpful guide:

> Principle 1: Confidentiality or loyalty to a counselee is a general rule.
>
> Principle 2: When knowledge of crimes or potential crimes against God and neighbor come to light, the person(s) must be exhorted to repent in order to restore or maintain biblically defined justice.
>
> Principle 3: When exhortation fails, contacting the appropriate God-ordained authorities for further exhortation and discipline is the appropriate action. These authorities are the family, church, and society—business or state.
>
> Principle 4: A promise or an assumption of total confidentiality in all circumstances is inappropriate for counselors in general and Christian counselors in particular.[75]

Having multiple elders involved in pastoral counseling might be foreign to many counselors, even in Christian counseling groups. However, the BCM must impart an understanding of this biblical aspect of pastoral counseling. Such education enhances the efficacy of biblical soul care while establishing safety measures for pastors and counselees. While this section does not provide an exhaustive analysis of the plurality in

[74] Refer to Steve Midgley's "A Familial Approach to Confidentiality in the Church" for more information on a theological explanation for the dynamic between biblical openness and concealment. Steve Midgley, "A Familial Approach to Confidentiality in the Church," *JBC* 31, no. 3 (2017): 45–59.

[75] Scipione, "The Limits of Confidentiality in Counseling," 32.

pastoral counseling—nor is it intended to—I argue that the BCM should acknowledge the distinctive biblical principle of pastoral plurality inherent in pastoral counseling. Furthermore, there is a pressing need for ongoing improvement in this approach's theological and practical dimensions to ensure its faithful and effective implementation.

Mutualistic: Pastoral Care through the Mutual Ministry of the Word

As discussed in the previous chapters, soul care ministry within the church is a process intricately tied to mutual ministry, emphasizing that the journey toward spiritual health and maturity extends beyond individualized counseling. Christ, the Good Shepherd, has appointed undershepherds and given his people various gifts to mutually care for one another according to their needs (Rom 12:6–8; 1 Cor 12:4–7; Gal 6:2; Eph 4:11–12; 1 Pet 5:2–4). Christ cares for his people through his entire Body, the church. For this reason, it is crucial for the BCM not to overemphasize the efficacy of one-on-one counseling alone. Instead, it should emphasize a care system that involves the entire body of believers working together. Powlison exhorts the movement in these words:

> I believe that to orient face-to-face cure of souls towards the mental health professional model is fundamentally, even disastrously, wrongheaded. At the same time, a commitment to truly wise church-oriented counseling ministry is years and decades from significant institutional realization. . . . What must we do now? Jesus calls us to ply our oars in the right direction, however far away the destination seems. Let's aim right.[76]

The biblical theology shepherding metaphor lays out the foundation for a pastoral theology characterized by the dynamic involvement of lay counselors. This approach aims at the collective sanctification of God's people, achieved through their mutual service to one another through the ministry of the Word (Rom 12:4–5; 1 Thess 5:11; Heb 10:24–25). Within this intricate spiritual and social context, pastors are appointed by Christ to initiate and sustain the system. Their responsibilities extend

[76] David Powlison, "Counseling Is the Church," *JBC* 20, no. 2 (2002): 6.

beyond conventional roles, encompassing the crucial tasks of preparing the laity for counseling and discipleship and overseeing the soul care program within the church. In essence, this theological paradigm underscores the collaborative efforts of pastors and lay members in fostering spiritual growth within the community, aligning with a shared mission for corporate sanctification.

This concept underscores the collective growth of the church, emphasizing that as a unified entity, it progresses when its members actively contribute to one another's well-being. Each member assumes a distinctive role within this collaborative care framework through their unique gifts and calling. Pastors, functioning as counselors-in-chief, significantly contribute to the overall welfare of the congregation. They not only equip every member for biblical counseling, acknowledging the varied gifts within the church, but also endeavor to place them in appropriate care contexts. Furthermore, this collaborative spirit transcends the boundaries of the church, extending to partnerships with the universal church. This includes collaborations with Christian psychiatrists, social workers, and medical doctors, illustrating the inclusive and expansive nature of the restoration efforts.

Additionally, as highlighted in chapter 4, the BCM must acknowledge that the training of biblical counselors entails more than just theological education centered on the cognitive aspect. It necessitates a theological education that guides them towards the spiritual and experiential maturity that occurs through the gospel. The shepherding metaphor is a poignant reminder that attaining Christ's likeness through epistemological (cognitive) and ontological (experiential) knowledge is indispensable. Without this foundation, Christians lack the preparation to shepherd others through biblical counseling effectively. Hence, the training for biblical counselors should encompass apprenticeship,

fostering a collaborative learning process with pastors or elders that is Christ-centered and gospel-oriented.[77]

Conclusion

The dissertation's primary objective is to assess the BCM's assertion that pastors should engage in biblical counseling with their members and equip them to become biblical counselors. Consequently, formulating a practical model through this dissertation would exceed its scope. Additionally, relying on a single biblical metaphor to create a comprehensive theory or method would not only broaden its purpose but would also be unwise, given the multitude of biblical concepts and doctrines that need consideration for such construction. Nevertheless, this chapter aimed to help the BCM recognize certain blind spots it may have overlooked.

To accomplish this, this chapter comprehensively explored the implications for pastoral counseling within the local church, guided by the working definition provided:

> Pastoral counseling, according to the biblical theology of shepherding metaphor, is a *personal* and *authoritative* ministry of the Word in which pastors, as undershepherds of Christ, intimately know, gather, guide, nurture, and protect each member of the flock under his care using Scripture with the *plurality* of elders and *mutual* care of the saints in the church. Their pastoral care and counseling seek to facilitate spiritual maturation by equipping and empowering individual sheep to become sheep more capable of caring for one another within the church alongside their elders.

The discussion commenced by elucidating the implications of the dual personal dimensions of pastoral counseling and then delving into the meaning of pastoral authority in counseling. Given the intricate nature of authority in this context, five shepherding functions—knowing, gathering, guiding, nurturing, and protecting—were delineated to navigate its complexity.

[77] Powlison also suggests a better training structure for the BCM, "We need ecclesiastically grounded supervisory structures for cure of souls. The church has often disciplined for morals or doctrinal offenses. But cure of souls tends to drop through the cracks." Powlison, "Counseling Is the Church," 5–6.

The examination expanded to consider the pluralistic and mutual facets of pastoral counseling, highlighting the vital importance of collaboration and shared responsibility—elements that often receive insufficient attention in contemporary Christian counseling practices. The aim was to demonstrate the intricate and comprehensive nature of pastoral counseling within the local church, stressing the need for a wholistic approach. This emphasis seeks to address any neglect of the interconnected and macro-level dynamics inherent in pastoral counseling, promoting a more inclusive understanding of its multifaceted role within the church community.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This dissertation investigated the biblical counseling movement's claim that pastors should provide biblical counseling to their congregations and equip them to be biblical counselors. To provide a thorough understanding and detailed analysis, this dissertation has approached this claim from three distinct perspectives: anthropological, epistemological, and ecclesiological. Subsequently, the dissertation evaluated the claim's validity using the biblical theology of shepherding as an analytical tool. Finally, based on the research findings, the dissertation provided practical implications for the movement. The remainder of this chapter will summarize each chapter, recommend further research, and end with concluding thoughts.

Summary of Arguments

This dissertation examined the BCM's claim from three theological angles to understand its meaning and intention. The tri-perspective analysis enabled readers to perceive that the assertion represents a theological vision of the movement. This vision aims to affirm our human need for God's counsel, assert the sufficiency of Scripture in offering guidance and promoting growth for God's people, and underscore the importance of pastors and laity in caring for the soul.

This dissertation has demonstrated that the biblical theology of the shepherding metaphor aligns with this theological conviction in several ways. The metaphor, portraying the image of a shepherd and his flock, illustrates that God's people require the Shepherd's guidance and protection. In his absence, they become lost and hopeless. Consequently, Christ, the Chief Shepherd, has appointed human

undershepherds to care for and counsel his flock through his sufficient Word. Additionally, Christ encourages all members of his flock to care for one another, with pastors playing a role in equipping and organizing their efforts.

Chapter 1 asserted that the BCM's claim that "pastors should biblically counsel their congregants and equip them to do likewise" is the movement's theological vision. That is to say, the claim should not be viewed as a practical guideline but a "shepherding perspective" that the movement's adherents should uphold in various ministry contexts to restore biblical counseling to the local churches. Thus, chapter 1 presents a comprehensive understanding of the claim from three different theological angles.

In terms of anthropology, biblical counseling adopts a dualistic perspective on human nature, emphasizing the interplay of spirit and body while rejecting the notion of an independent psyche or soul. Pastors, identified as ultimate soul care experts, are designated to guide individuals toward salvation and progressive sanctification in Christ, applying biblical truths to life's challenges and imparting this knowledge to lay counselors. From an epistemological standpoint, the movement underscores the sufficiency of Scripture in counseling, viewing it as God's inspired Word with inherent divine power and redemptive guidance. As gifted and appointed individuals, pastors are integral in instructing and shepherding God's people, simultaneously playing a vital role in equipping lay Christians to counsel one another. Lastly, the ecclesiological perspective addresses pastors as authorized biblical counselors within the church's institutional framework for nurturing believers' souls. Pastoral counseling is an extension of broader pastoral care ministries, necessitating a delicate balance between counseling duties and other responsibilities. Acknowledging the impracticality of daily counseling sessions for every member, pastors are entrusted with preparing everyone to actively contribute to the church's overarching soul-care ministry, creating both formal and informal biblical counseling initiatives and cultivating a discipleship culture within their congregations.

Chapter 2 presented the shepherding metaphor in the Scriptures as an analytical tool to scrutinize the BCM's claim. This chapter does not cover every biblical passage related to the shepherding metaphor; rather, it focuses on critical passages that demonstrate how Christ fulfills the role of the eschatological Shepherd promised by God. Through his sacrifice and resurrection, Christ gathers, nurtures, knows, leads, and protects his chosen flock through the last days toward their eternal dwelling with him. Pastors and elders are appointed leaders called to imitate Christ, the Model Shepherd, by sacrificing their lives through the power of the resurrection already at work. In doing so, they serve as a model of Christ's sacrificial life, helping their congregation to become more Christlike. Therefore, pastors play an essential role in discipling and maturing their sheep, who can become like Christ and mutually serve one another.

Chapter 3 explored the alignment between the biblical counseling movement's first assertion that pastors should provide biblical counseling and the biblical theology of shepherding. From an anthropological standpoint, this chapter argued that although the shepherding metaphor does not explicitly endorse a dichotomous view, it implicitly supports it, entrusting pastors to offer biblical counseling with the primary goal of guiding congregants toward sanctification. Similarly, from an epistemological perspective, pastors, armed with a foundation in God's Word, are qualified to extend biblical counsel to their congregants while still acknowledging the potential participation of lay individuals in the church's counseling ministry. Transitioning to the ecclesiological perspective, pastors are seen as competent biblical counselors due to their training and role as shepherds of the church. Despite employing various facets of the biblical theology of the shepherding metaphor to elucidate this perspective, the issue of pastoral authority within the biblical counseling movement has surfaced. Drawing insights from the shepherding metaphor, I argued that David Powlison's model, emphasizing both authority and humility in pastoral counseling, resonates more closely with the biblical depiction of shepherding ministry, highlighting the harmonious interplay of pastoral

authority and humility within the broader context of the church's shepherding ministry as revealed in the Bible.

Chapter 4 explored the alignment between the biblical counseling movement's second assertion that pastors should equip congregants to become biblical counselors through the biblical theology of shepherding. From an anthropological perspective, the argument is made that sanctification is a collective endeavor tied to the well-being of others within the church, emphasizing active service as essential for genuine Christian maturation. This perspective aligns with the shepherding metaphor, portraying Christians as sheep and potential caregivers for one another, thus resembling the Good Shepherd. In the epistemological section, the biblical counseling movement's assertion, rooted in the sufficiency of Scripture, is explained, emphasizing the call for every Christian to mature in the likeness of the Good Shepherd. While recognizing this, a critical stance is taken, underlining the need for pastors' proper theological training to ensure effective counseling. Transitioning to the ecclesiological dimension, the section explains that the movement's proposal for pastors to equip biblical counselors stems from the belief that the entire church is designated for soul-care ministry, with pastors serving as equippers and overseers. The responsibility for soul care extends collectively to the entire church, where pastor-teachers play a pivotal role in fostering biblical counseling and disciple-making to fulfill the broader calling of the church to care for one another and grow into the likeness of Christ.

Chapter 5 outlined how the analysis of the dissertation's findings relates to present-day pastoral counseling. The discussion began by exploring the dual personal dimensions of pastoral counseling and delving into the meaning of pastoral authority. I outlined five shepherding functions—knowing, gathering, guiding, nurturing, and protecting—to navigate the intricate nature of pastoral authority. The analysis highlighted the importance of collaboration and shared responsibility in pastoral counseling, often

overlooked in contemporary Christian practices, and emphasized the need for a church-wide approach to congregational care and counseling.

Overall, this dissertation has attempted to make a new contribution to the BCM and evangelical churches. Although the BCM emphasized its conviction that pastors should biblically counsel their members and equip them to do likewise, the claim was never supported through solid biblical-theological research. In this context, this study aims to furnish comprehensive biblical-theological support for evangelical churches and their pastors to consider and adopt the movement's theological vision for caring for their congregants in a biblical manner. Nevertheless, this exploration of pastoral counseling remains incomplete, and further academic contributions on this topic are necessary to build a stronger case and benefit the church of Christ. Consequently, the next section proposes suggestions for future research.

Suggestions for Future Study

First, the BCM would benefit from developing a field manual that demonstrates the pastor's dual role as a biblical counselor and an equipper of biblical counselors, which is imperative. Although the present dissertation explained a theological aspect of pastoral counseling, a practical manual firmly grounded in the biblical theology of shepherding holds the potential to offer pastors a tangible explanation that can help them envision a church-based counseling ministry. The crafting of this manual, specifically tailored for pastors and elders, could serve as a ministry framework, assisting pastors in understanding their role as shepherd-counselors within the broader scope of the entire church ministry. By addressing the unique responsibilities of pastors, this manual can become a practical aid, enabling them to navigate the intricacies of counseling while aligning with the overarching objectives of their church's ministry. I suggest that another PhD dissertation or DMin thesis or project could produce such a manual.

Second, the BCM would benefit from a careful study of church history evaluating the claim that pastors should be involved in biblical counseling and responsible for training biblical counselors. As Gavin Ortlund claims, the church "has always drawn from her past to meet the challenges of her present."[1] Investing in historical research, including patristics and Reformation pastoral theology studies, can give a deeper understanding of pastoral ministry for the movement. Some publications proved valuable by offering the theological aspects of the roles of pastors and elders in shepherding ministry.[2] However, historical research has the potential to yield a more comprehensive and practical understanding of the crucial role that pastors play in the field of care and counseling in the context of the church. By examining historical theology and practice, the BCM can learn more about integrating pastoral counseling and lay involvement in soul care ministry.[3]

Third, the BCM would benefit from creating various context-appropriate pastoral counseling models. The movement currently offers limited resources to assist churches in establishing a system of soul care and training lay counselors. This does not suggest a lack of interest among biblical counselors in ecclesiological counseling, including pastoral counseling.[4] However, compared to other themes in biblical

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[1] Historical theology has served as a litmus test for contemporary debates and provides a wealth of theological resources in developing better theology and practice for the church. Gavin Ortlund, *Theological Retrieval for Evangelicals: Why We Need Our Past to Have a Future* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 18.

[2] Refer to Daniel L. Akin and R. Scott Pace, *Pastoral Theology: Theological Foundations for Who a Pastor Is and What He Does* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2017); Andrew Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology: A Christological Foundation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004).

[3] For instance, Scott Manetsch's *Calvin's Company of Pastors* is a valuable resource for pastors to understand how Calvin and his team of pastors, elders, and theological doctors in Geneva in the late seventeenth century cared for their parishioners. Since it also introduces pastoral mistakes and pitfalls, I believe resources such as these can provide a practical perspective to understand how to implement the BCM's theological vision in contemporary pastoral ministry. Scott M. Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church, 1536–1609*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[4] Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju's *The Pastor and Counseling* is the only biblical counseling book that covers pastoral counseling within the church. Concerning lay counseling training, Robert Kellemen's *Equipping Biblical Counselors* is the only practical book written by a biblical counselor that provides practical guidelines for developing an ecclesiological care system for a church.

counseling, such as addressing common issues like anxiety and marriage conflict, the movement has not extensively delved into the ecclesiological structure and the significance of the pastoral role within. The biblical counseling movement must carefully consider developing various ecclesiological approaches to soul care for different ministry contexts, providing practical guides for pastors to train and organize, and work together with non-staff elders and lay members. For example, these guides may cover topics such as how a pastor can initiate a counseling case and involve trained lay members for assistance or even delegate the whole case to them. Additionally, the guidance may include when a lay member who initiates a case should consult with the pastor or even invite the pastor to join the sessions.

Specifically, from a missiological standpoint, the BCM should consider churches in diverse cultural and ethnic settings aiming to integrate the biblical counseling ministry into their congregations. For instance, a soul care system effective for a multiethnic church in the United States might not suit a monoethnic church in Japan. Therefore, biblical counselors developing ecclesiological soul care systems must incorporate cultural sensitivity through relevant research and missional engagement. While the theological vision and conviction concerning pastoral involvement remain unchanged, diverse practical care models and systems are essential due to varying ministry contexts that require context-appropriate approaches.

Fourth, biblical counseling would benefit from further research on the role of deacons in the church's soul care ministry.[5] A critical gap exists, particularly in understanding the specific contributions of deacons in soul care ministry in relation to the role of pastors. Considering the BCM's strong emphasis on the corporate engagement of the entire church in the care of souls, it becomes crucial for pastors to acknowledge and

[5] I am referring to local churches led by a plurality of elders with deacons who assist them, not churches with a single pastor and a board of deacons that serve as the governing board of the church. I acknowledge that some churches do not agree with the plurality of elders and elder-led church governance.

appreciate the vital role of deacons in this endeavor. By delving into the foundational and practical role that deacons play in soul care, pastors can enhance their understanding and effectively train and guide deacons to provide valuable support to individuals grappling with pain and distress within the church community. Recognizing and harnessing the potential of deacons in the realm of soul care can significantly contribute to creating a more comprehensive and effective pastoral care and counseling structure within the church.

Concluding Thoughts

I would like to end this dissertation with some brief concluding thoughts. First, the biblical counseling movement must prioritize pastoral counseling to offer churches a healthy biblical soul care model. Jay Adams, the founder of the biblical counseling movement, envisioned the restoration of counseling to the church, specifically by equipping and training pastors for biblical counseling ministry. He was concerned about pastors giving up their "backyard"—pastoral responsibility, authority, and expertise as counselors—to secular mental health professionals. Thus, he explained his vision in these words:

> By making pastors fully aware of the property given to them in a clear deed from God, I have been trying to persuade pastors to so utilize and cultivate their own backyards that such encroachments from neighbors would become unnecessary and, indeed, highly embarrassing to those who make them.
>
> This approach I believe is succeeding. The self-styled "professionals" (I say *self-styled* because I believe that the Bible teaches that God has called the pastor to be the professional counselor) have felt the impact of thousands of pastors who have themselves begun to take seriously the work to which God called them and for which they are well equipped by their knowledge of the Scriptures . . ..
>
> I shall continue to pursue the task of equipping, training, supplying pastors with all the help that I can. That, I believe, is my present call from God.[6]

[6] Jay E. Adams, *What about Nouthetic Counseling? A Question and Answer Book with History, Help and Hope for the Christian Counselor* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 45.

Adams understood that to restore biblical counseling in local churches, pastors needed to be awakened. For this reason, he envisioned Christian Counseling Education Foundation, the movement's first academic institution, to primarily focus on pastors. However, as Powlison analyzed through historical research, the movement made the shift toward training both pastors and lay Christians. He explains, "Adams had viewed the counseling role of CCEF as distinctly subordinate to the training needs of pastors. . . . But as Bettler went to work developing the institutions, they increasingly became an extension of his vision for specialized education in counseling and for specialized pastoral practice by nonpastors as well."[7] In other words, CCEF diverged from Adams's initial vision by focusing on education and participation of lay counseling professionals. This shift to include nonpastors brought positive attention to the development of general theories and methods of biblical counseling as discussed in chapter 1.

However, the biblical counseling movement needs to maintain a healthy balance between pastoral and lay counseling. It is vital to recognize that effective lay counseling can function within churches only when pastors take on the shepherding role, biblically counseling the congregants and training them to become biblical counselors. The success of ecclesiological counseling relies on pastors who are adept at biblical counseling and equipping lay counselors guiding its growth and development. In other words, pastoral counseling ministry assumes the primary role over lay counseling in the church. Hence, biblical counselors need to devote significant attention to the development of counseling theories and methods that incorporate pastoral participation.

Second, the BCM must encourage and call evangelical pastors to participate in the biblical counseling ministry within their churches. Ironically, in the history of pastoral care in America, conservative pastors contributed to the divergence of theology and counseling. Heath Lambert explains, "They [conservative pastors] demonstrated the

[7] David Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement: History and Context* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2010), 60.

misunderstanding every time they say things like, 'Oh, I don't counsel people; I'm a preacher' or, 'Counseling takes too much time away from my other ministries,' or, 'I don't think the Bible has anything to say about this problem; you need to see a professional.'"[8]

The divergence and misunderstanding still exists today. In his shocking survey in 2018, Thom Rainer, a former president of LifeWay Christian Resources, discovered that out of 1,178 pastor-participants, only 1 percent answered that they enjoy counseling ministry.[9] Compared to the overwhelming 40 percent of the pastors who love preaching the most, 1 percent seems rather alarming. In his continued research in the same year, Rainer also uncovered the seven reasons why pastors avoid counseling ministry, all of which were for practical reasons. When it comes to counseling ministry, pastors say they (1) do not feel qualified, (2) are concerned about liabilities, (3) think that it is not fruitful, (4) think that it is time-consuming, (5) are fearful of blame, (6) can always refer to professionals, and (7) feel uncomfortable about counseling opposite gender.[10] Upon observing the survey, some might conclude that practical considerations are the determining factors behind the refusal of many pastors to implement counseling ministries in their congregations. However, theological rather than practical considerations are the primary justifications for abandoning counseling ministry in the church. One of these theological considerations pertains to a failure to recognize that the biblical pastoral ministry includes counseling and equipping biblical counselors as addressed in this dissertation.

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[8] Heath Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 22.

[9] Thom S. Rainer, "What Do Pastors Like Most about Their Ministries?," *Church Answers* (blog), October 15, 2018, https://churchanswers.com/blog/pastors-like-ministries/.

[10] Thom S. Rainer, "Seven Reasons Why Many Pastors Avoid a Counseling Ministry," *Church Answers* (blog), October 22, 2018, https://churchanswers.com/blog/seven-reasons-many-pastors-avoid-counseling-ministry/.

In this context, the movement needs to dedicate more attention to developing pastoral theology to persuade pastors to actively engage in the work of biblical shepherding. Like Adams's approach in *Competent to Counsel*, the movement should actively summon and inspire pastors to embrace the role of shepherds who take pastoral biblical counseling seriously. Building upon the achievements of the previous generation of biblical counselors, the movement must now provide academic theological content to convince pastors of the legitimacy of their role as biblical counselors and equippers of biblical counselors. Unless the movement continues to challenge and encourage evangelical pastors to participate in the biblical counseling movement, biblical counseling cannot fully realize its potential in the maturing of the church.

Finally, more churches should exemplify a culture of biblical care and engage in pastoral ministry using the biblical shepherding model. After hearing the theological vision of the biblical counseling ministry in the church, pastors frequently inquire, "Can you point me to churches that can serve as practical models for us?" This is a critical question because, for many pastors, witnessing a functional and robust biblical counseling model in the church is more impactful than reading hundreds of academic articles and books. The movement needs courageous pastors ready to implement biblical counseling in a church where historically there has been no counseling or there has been heavy referral out to secular or integrationist counseling.

When evangelical pastors witness numerous churches maturing through biblical shepherding, aligning with the vision of the Biblical Counseling Movement, they will gain conviction to become part of the movement. They will observe the beauty of Christ's church functioning as a unified body, guided by undershepherds who provide instructions and oversight and foster healing and transformation in the lives and families of congregants. Through these ecclesiological care models, they will ultimately come to understand that God, the Shepherd of his people, is at work in his church as a shepherd, ultimately bringing honor to himself.

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ABSTRACT

THE PASTOR AS A BIBLICAL COUNSELOR AND EQUIPPER OF BIBLICAL COUNSELORS WITHIN THE LOCAL CHURCH

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2024
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This dissertation examines the theological foundations of the Biblical Counseling Movement (BCM), focusing on the claim that "pastors should biblically counsel their congregants and equip them to do likewise." Through a tri-perspective analysis, the study aligns the BCM's theological vision with the biblical theology of the shepherding metaphor, emphasizing pastors as crucial guides in biblical counseling and equipping believers for mutual care.

Chapter 1 establishes the claim as the movement's theological vision, exploring anthropological, epistemological, and ecclesiological perspectives. Pastors are seen as authorized counselors within the church's institutional framework. Chapter 2 explores the shepherding metaphor, showcasing Christ as the eschatological Shepherd. Pastors emulate Christ's sacrificial life, guiding congregations toward maturity. Chapter 3 examines the alignment between the BCM's claim and the biblical theology of shepherding, emphasizing pastors' competence in counseling and the potential involvement of lay individuals. Chapter 4 delves into the second assertion that pastors should equip congregants to become biblical counselors. Pastors play a pivotal role in overseeing the church's soul-care ministry. Chapter 5 discusses practical implications, emphasizing collaborative pastoral counseling, the multifaceted nature of pastoral authority, and the need for a church-wide approach to congregational care.

Overall, this dissertation provides comprehensive biblical theological support for the BCM's claim, offering a theological vision for evangelical churches. While acknowledging the need for further research, the study aims to strengthen the case for pastors engaging in biblical counseling and equipping believers, ultimately benefiting the church of Christ.

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