

# Shepherding in Scripture

## Leading in the Local Church

Four Descriptions - becoming leaders who are:

1. Models of Character (1 Tim 3:1-15; Titus 1:6-9; 1 Cor 11:1).  
“Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ”
2. Guardians of Doctrine (Acts 20:28-30; 1 Cor. 4:1; 2 Tim 1:14).  
“Servants of Christ and managers of God’s mysteries” “Guard the good deposit”
3. Champions for Mission (Mark 10:45; Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; Rev 5:9-10)
4. Shepherds of Care (Jer 23:1-4; 1 Pet 5:2-3). “Shepherd the flock of God.”

“Among all the metaphors God could have used, He chose ‘shepherd’ to describe Himself as a leader and to describe the leaders of his Church...We must seek to produce shepherds, not just executives. We need to be forming men and women into loving caretakers of the flock, not just effective directors...We must be looking for and developing loving shepherds, not cattle-driving ranchers.”<sup>1</sup>

What are the differences between loving shepherds vs. executives or cattle-driving ranchers?

## Shepherding and the Story of God

This rich metaphor can be traced through the story of Scripture. Shepherd-leadership is connected with who God is, what He has done in Christ, how leaders are to serve the Church, and the rule of Christ in the new heavens and earth.

### Creation

- God is the shepherd of His people.
- He creates and sustains shepherd-leaders.
- Leaders learn their identity as shepherds from how God shepherds His people.  
“He tends his flock like a shepherd; He gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them close to His heart; He gently leads those that have young.” (Is 40:11)

God as shepherd in Psalm 23. What are the characteristics of God as a shepherd?

Human leaders as God’s under-shepherds. God shepherds His people through O.T. shepherd-leaders: Moses (Ps 77:20), David (Ps 78:70-72), and those in leadership roles of the nation of Israel.

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<sup>1</sup> From *Designed to Lead* by Geiger and Peck, pp. 92-98.

## **Fall**

God's perfect design for His under-shepherds is polluted by sinful leaders.

Israel rebelled and their their shepherd-leaders failed (Ezk 34:1-15).

How did the shepherds fail in their leadership?

How did God promise to correct the situation? What characteristics of God's shepherding care do we see?

How are we tempted to be like the condemned shepherds of Israel in our ministry leadership?  
How can we combat these tendencies by following God's example of shepherding?

## **Redemption**

As their divine, loving shepherd, God redeems His people through Christ, the Good Shepherd who gives His life for the sheep. Christ displays God's perfect design for shepherd-leaders.

God's solution to sinful shepherding:

1) He will step in where the human shepherds have failed and provide Jesus, the Good Shepherd (Jer 23:1-6; Matt 2:5-6; John 10:11-18).

How do we see this theme promised in Jeremiah 23:1-6?

Where human leaders failed, Christ succeeded. He became the agent of God's redemption as the Good Shepherd. What are the characteristics of Christ as the Good Shepherd in John 10:11-18, 27-29?

What are some examples of these characteristics in the life and ministry of Christ? (for help try Mark 6:34; Matthew 18:12-14)

2) God provides shepherd-leaders for His people as He builds the Church.

They are filled with the Spirit as shepherds after God's own heart.

“And I will give you shepherds after my own heart,  
who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.” (Jer 3:15)

“The Holy Spirit has made you overseers.” (Acts 20:28)

What are some characteristics of shepherd-leaders in the New Testament? (John 21:15-23; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4; 1 Thess 5:14).

Do any of these characteristics stand out to you as especially important right now to apply to your ministry leadership? How might you do this?

**The Hope:** In this life, though in Christ we are fully righteous in God's sight, we will struggle with imperfect shepherd-leadership. We fall short in our motivations, words, and deeds. But we can take heart that God's Spirit is within us and that someday our Chief Shepherd will appear to make all things new!

“May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” (Hebrews 13:20-21)

### **New Creation**

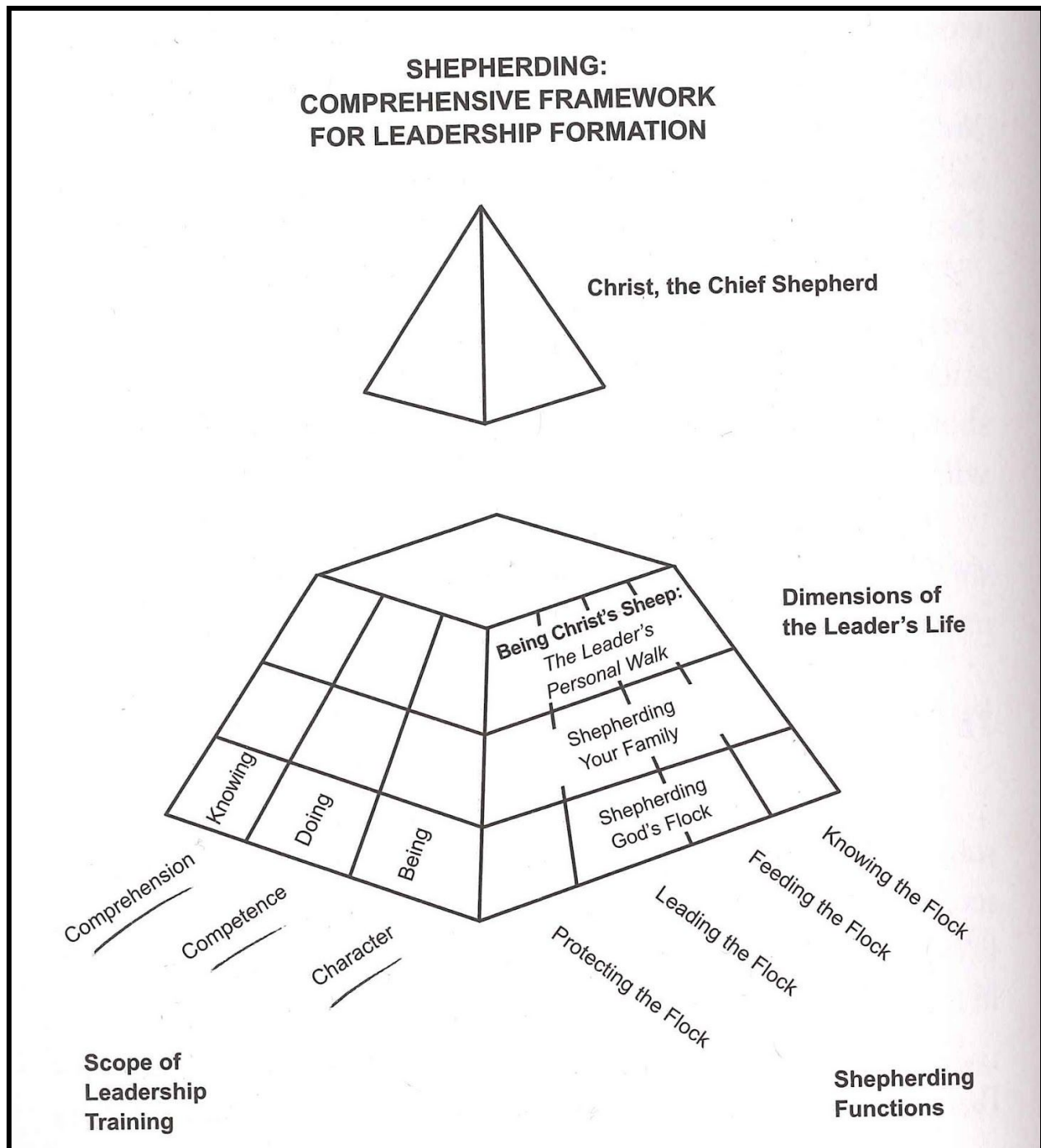
In in the New Creation, Christ will gather and guide his people as their eternal shepherd-leader. Human shepherd-leaders will be made perfect and wonderfully lead in his kingdom (1 Peter 5:4; Rev 7:16-17).

“Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” (Rev 7:16-17)

### **Time for Further Application and Prayer**

How will you specifically apply these principles of shepherding to your life and ministry?

## Appendix - Shepherding Illustration: Training Areas, Life Roles, and Functions



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Why is it significant that Christ is the top triangle? How is the shepherding metaphor interconnected with your functions as a leader, life dimensions, and scope of training?

<sup>2</sup> From *The Shepherd Leader* by Timothy Witmer, 162.