

**WHAT SHOULD I CALL YOU? ADDRESSING THE PRESBYTER**

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## **What Should I Call You? Addressing the Presbyter**

With the powerful effect of the internet, it is almost impossible to remain incognito in today's society. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, MySpace, Blogs, and various other social media have completely changed the attitude of the world. Each of these different aspects of social media opens the door of opportunity for a person to gain instant notoriety. Perhaps, it is the prospect of being recognized or noticed that can be enamoring; however, recognition can come with a heavy price. The conceivable price for being noticed, is that it creates a persona that was, at times, not intended in the origin. Moreover, once a person has created an image, that image is possibly forever burned in the minds of everyone that had taken notice of the original show. Thus, that person has been "labeled," and "labels" are not easy to shake off. What is interesting about this, is that the person seemingly desired to become known, but now has created a character that is classified by a concept. Impressions can be perplexing, yet for some reason human beings like to be able to recognize others with some sort of classification.

One of the most interesting types of classification is that of a minister. Some are known as pastor, some as preacher, and some are called reverend.<sup>1</sup> Each of these "labels" seems to create a type of mystic that allows the person to advertise who they are. Yet, what is concerning is that many seem to wear these labels as badges of prestige. One then begins to wonder, "Is it scriptural for a minister of Christ to carry a name that suggests an identity of prestige?"

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Spears notes, "The word 'reverend' is derived from the Latin 'reverendus,' which means 'worthy of being revered.' The word 'reverend' was initially used of persons in general, persons who were worthy of deep respect on account of their age, rank, or character. It was used of persons commanding respect because of their personal ability or great learning." Philip Spears, "The Title 'Reverend': A Pompous Ecclesiastical Absurdity?" A Paper Presented at a regional meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Wake Forest, North Carolina, March 23, 2012.

The goal that the author of this paper has, is to examine what is meant by the term [ἐπίσκοπος - under-shepherd] in the Bible. Once this has been determined, the objective that the writer of this paper has, is to purposefully flush out the various concepts that are meant by the term under-shepherd. It is at this point, that the compiler of the information found within this paper, desires to show that God has an overarching purpose for creating the persona of an under-shepherd. Thus, the intent that the author of this paper has, is to discover how Jesus Christ wants His shepherds to be known.

### **The Term ἐπίσκοπος - Under-Shepherd**

One of the utmost distinguishing words in the Bible is that of shepherd. The term “shepherd,” according to the Old Testament, has a rich biblical meaning or perception. And, by the time the New Testament had been compiled, the term shepherd had developed into the notion of a pastor.<sup>2</sup>

The concept of being a pastor, in the Bible, appears to be that of a leader; not in the sense of being some type of director, but rather it seems to suggest that a pastor is to be a paradigm or example.<sup>3</sup> In fact, Derek Prime and Alistair Begg note that “a shepherd . . . is to give God’s people an example to follow. God’s people require examples if they are to be effectively

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<sup>2</sup> Jay Adams states, “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’ (Ps 80:1), ultimately demonstrated the meaning of His covenantal love as the Great Shepherd of the sheep by giving His life for them (Jn 10:11).” Jay E. Adams, *Shepherding God’s Flock: A Handbook on Pastoral Ministry, Counseling, and Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 5.

<sup>3</sup> Timothy Laniak states that shepherds “were known for independence, resourcefulness, adaptability, courage and vigilance. Their profession cultivated a capacity for attentiveness, self-sacrifice and compassion.” Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds After My own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006), 57.

shepherded and taught.”<sup>4</sup> A shepherd/pastor has one overarching objective – to teach character. G. Wallis helps flush this idea out as he contends, “Since time immemorial, the occupation of shepherd has exercised immense cultural and religious influence.”<sup>5</sup> The job of a shepherd was not to be viewed as a prestigious job, but rather an unappreciated undertaking which involved taking care of obstinate creatures (Is 53:6). Therefore, one is able to see why Paul was so concerned about the character of a pastor.<sup>6</sup>

Going back to the Old Testament, it was the duty of the shepherd to “care tirelessly” for his flock.<sup>7</sup> The shepherd took upon himself the responsibility of “getting involved with” his flock.<sup>8</sup> However, he was not to become one of the flock, but rather to be a helper, and not some type of figurehead or concept. Hermann Beyer explains as he stipulates that “term [ἐπίσκοπος –

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<sup>4</sup> Derek Prime and Alistair Begg, *On Being a Pastor: Understanding Our Calling and Work* (Chicago: Moody, 2012), 36. Furthermore, they will maintain, “The New Testament places as great a stress upon character as a qualification for spiritual leadership as upon gifting—in fact, probably more upon character.” Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> G. Wallis, “רעה,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 13 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 547. Wallis observes, “Since the dawn of history, the shepherd has demonstrated an affinity with the most varied occupations. He has to be familiar with land forms and soils, as well as with the settlements of a region and their history, if he is to lead his flock in timely fashion to a safe resting place with pasturage and water. Clearly his close involvement with the natural world gives him outstanding knowledge of meteorology and a sharp eye for the early signs of local storms. He also has a keen eye for danger from wild animals; he knows their nature and habits, as well as how to combat them.” Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Gene A. Getz, *Elders and Leaders: God’s Plan for Leading the Church – A Biblical, Historical and Cultural Perspective* (Chicago: Moody, 2003), 155–162.

<sup>7</sup> E. Beyreuther, “Shepherd,” in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 564.

<sup>8</sup> J. A. Soggin, “רעה,” in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. 3 (Hendrickson: Peabody, 1997), 1246. Wallis contends, “The shepherd is intimately associated with the animals of his flock at all times. They recognize him as their leader; he understands the sounds they make and responds to them effectively. If the animals can actually distinguish their own shepherd from others and he can tell them apart (Jn 10:3–4, 14), he must be endowed with wisdom, perspicacity, and empathy.” Wallis, “רעה,” 547.

under-shepherd] is closely linked in describing the work of the shepherd.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, the shepherd was known for his work and not his position. This understanding would outwardly provide a visual awareness that would enable people to be pointed to a “covenantal God.”<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, what makes the term shepherd so distinguishing is that it was originated by God, Himself. Interestingly, Beyreuther conveys that “Yahweh is the only shepherd of his people, Israel.”<sup>11</sup> The reason that God is identified as “the only shepherd of his people” seems to stem from the fact that He feeds/takes care of His people. Thus, the notion of feeding and taking care of His people is one that is passed on from God to His commissioned servants – prophets, priest, and kings.<sup>12</sup> These servants of the Lord were instructed to feed and nurture (2 Sam 5:2) God’s people with great care.<sup>13</sup> Because these servants of the Lord fed and took care of God’s

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<sup>9</sup> Hermann W. Beyer, “ἐπίσκοπος,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 2. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 615.

<sup>10</sup> See, W. J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1984) and John H. Walton, *Covenant: God’s Purpose, God’s Plan* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994).

<sup>11</sup> Beyreuther, “Shepherd,” 565. “The title is used disinterestedly only in Gen 48:15; 49:24.” Ibid. Later he will note, “The acknowledgment that Yahweh was the shepherd of Israel grew out of the living religious experience of the people and is thus to be distinguished from the cold courtly style of the ancient East. In invocation, in praise, in prayer for forgiveness, but also in temptation and despair (Ps 73), the worshipers know that they are still safe in the care of God the faithful shepherd (the most beautiful expression of this is Ps 23).” Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Wallis notes, “The OT accurately reflects the milieu of shepherds and their flock. Only very hesitantly, however, did the OT connect the shepherd concept with the leadership exercised by kings and by God. This may be because the kingship of Israel, in contrast to the monarchies of the surrounding world, was not rooted in ancient tradition and history. Possibly at the time Israel adopted kingship the title ‘shepherd’ was already fraught with certain other notions, so that simply adoption of this allegory was problematic. There is no evidence that the term ‘shepherd’ ever served as a title for a reigning king of Israel.” Wallis, “רעה,” 549–550.

<sup>13</sup> William White, “רעה,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 2 (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 853. White notes, “Failure of the officers of Israel to feed the people either physical or spiritual nourishment was deemed a severe transgression (Ezk 24:2ff). In this chapter the prophet plays repeatedly on the two forms of the root, *ra’ a*, the verb meaning ‘to pasture’ and the noun meaning the ‘pastor’ or shepherd.” Ibid. White will later state, “The OT theological idea of the good shepherd who feeds his flock with God’s truth (Jer 3:15) becomes prominent in the NT (Jn 10:11).” Ibid.

people, His presence was never questioned.<sup>14</sup> Not even when God used bizarre circumstances and people to do His bidding (i.e. Cyrus). Beyreuther comments that “God called Cyrus, king of Persia, ‘my shepherd.’ Like a good shepherd, in accordance with God’s will, he was concerned for the well-being of the returning exiles and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and of the → temple.”<sup>15</sup> One might wonder why God would allow an outsider to do His bidding. Jer 23:1–4 seems to provide the answer with verse one giving the measure as it states, “Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!”<sup>16</sup> God’s servants (“shepherds”) had failed at their responsibilities. Shepherds had an obligation – “watch over” the flock; however, they did not – they “scattered them.”<sup>17</sup> Wallis contends, “The shepherds have failed to keep the flock together, allowing it to scatter. This failure gives Yahweh reason to intervene personally and entrust the flock to new shepherds, who will pasture their flock faithfully and responsibly.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, one can surmise that shepherding is not about a position or title, it is about care. To further the point, one finds in the New Testament Jesus cautioning his disciples (Matt 23:8–12) not to strive toward a title or recognition. Rather, they had a duty – to be a servant.

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<sup>14</sup> Beyreuther, “Shepherd,” 565.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 566.

<sup>16</sup> F. B. Huey comments, “These verses are a woe oracle upon the ‘shepherds’ responsible for scattering and destroying the sheep of God’s pasture. ‘Shepherd’ was a word widely used of rulers in the ANE. The language is figurative, but the meaning is clear. The ‘shepherds’ included the kings of Judah and other leaders (see 10:21; cf. 25:34–38; Ezek 34; John 10:1–18). The verbs ‘scattering and destroying’ are both participles, thus indicating a continual practice. ‘The sheep of my pasture’ continues the metaphor (cf. Ezek 34:31). The sheep were the people of Judah for whom the Lord had tender concern because of their mistreatment at the hands of their rulers.” F. B. Huey, Jr., *Jeremiah, Lamentation*, The New American Commentary, vol. 16 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1993), 210.

<sup>17</sup> J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 487.

<sup>18</sup> Wallis, “רעה,” 551.

What seems to be the essential concern for Jesus is hypocrisy. In Matt 23:8–12, Jesus ridiculed the scribes and Pharisees for their appearance and attitude. His pronounced concern appears to be stated as follows: “How can they be the religious leaders of their society with such an attitude?” R. T. France explains as he notes that “while still commenting on the practice of the scribes and Pharisees, the disciples are directly addressed by Jesus, warning them against adopting this status-seeking attitude.”<sup>19</sup> In addition, David Turner remarks, “The disciples are forbidden the ostentatious use of honorific titles such as ‘rabbi,’ ‘father,’ and ‘teacher’ because no human being is worthy of such honor. Rather, such titles should be reserved for the heavenly Father and Jesus the Messiah.”<sup>20</sup> Shepherds are not to usurp Jesus, but to follow His example.<sup>21</sup> What is interesting is that during the intertestamental period shepherds were viewed disapprovingly.<sup>22</sup> Beyreuther expounds and ties everything together as he states that “contemporaries despised the shepherd, but this was the metaphor which Jesus used to glorify God’s love for sinners and to reveal his opposition to Pharisaic condemnation of them.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> R. T. France, *Matthew*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 1 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992), 325. France continues by documenting that “against that unique authority his disciples must avoid the use of honorific titles for one another – an exhortation which today’s church could profitably take more seriously, not only in relation to formal ecclesiastical titles, but more significantly in its excessive deference to academic qualifications or to authoritative status in the churches.” *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 547. Craig L. Blomberg explains further as he states, “People are properly called teachers in Acts 13:1; 1 Tim 2:7; and Heb 5:12. Paul will even refer to a spiritual gift that enables some people to be so identified (Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 12:28–29; cf. Jas 3:1). It remains appropriate to call a biological parent one’s father, and even one’s spiritual parent may be addressed with this term (1 Cor 4:15; cf. also 1 John 2:13; Acts 22:1). So the point of vv. 8–12 must be that titles are not to be used to confer privilege or status.” Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1992), 342–343.

<sup>21</sup> Beyer rightly observes that in 1 Pet 2:25 – Christ is referred to as ἐπίσκοπος “He is the One who gives Himself most self-sacrificingly to care for the souls of the faithful.” Beyer, “ἐπίσκοπος,” 615.

<sup>22</sup> Beyreuther, “Shepherd,” 566.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*



### **The Duties of Under-Shepherd - ἐπίσκοπος**

The thought of there being a God who is closely related to man provides a familiarity that seems to delight man, but this understanding can at times be somewhat perplexing. How can a Being (God), that desires a personal relationship with another being (man), not be unmistakably observable? God is supposed to be a Being who is willing to be fully involved with mankind so that He is inclined to assist man in achieving a position of a higher level. It can be believed, by man, that God is a Being who sits in heaven anxiously waiting to assist man in his times of trial. A God of relation is one who provides for man. With this type of belief, it almost appears as though God is expected to be much like a genie in a magic lamp. Without any hesitation, God is always supposed to be committed to being ready and willing to oblige man. Yet, Scripture does not give the impression that this is the right portrait which man should have of God. There are times when God appears to fall in the above mentioned category; however, there are other times when He does not fit into that classification. In fact, at intervals within Scripture, God looks as if He is a Judge and at other times He appears as Warrior who is in some type of conflict and is determined to destroy anything that opposes Him. The notion of God being in some kind of conflict with man seems somewhat disturbing.

To be sure, Scripture gives every indication of God as a Being who desires to have an intimate relationship with man. Walter Brueggemann shares, “Given several dimensions of mutation, we may judge that the distinctiveness of ‘God’ in Old Testament tradition concerns YHWH’s deep resolve to be a God in relation—in relation to Israel, in relation to creation, in

relation to members of Israelite society and of the human community more generally.”<sup>24</sup> As an integral part of this “deep resolve” God does determine to be bound to man (Gen 15), but at the same time man is urged to be obligated to God. Apparently, according to Scripture this is not an easy task. As noted before, there seem to be periods when God seems to fit into a nice neat depiction, but there are other times when He does not. Thus, God imparted man with the ability for understanding so that he is able to examine his own heart (1 Cor 11:28; Gal 6:4) and his own posture before the Lord. There can be little question that God is autonomous. Brueggemann contends, “The power and sovereignty of YHWH is a given in the Old Testament that is rarely called into question. What is readily and often called into question in the text is the character of this God in relation, a defining mark of YHWH that requires a radical revision of our notion of God. The overriding indicator of God in relationship is covenant.”<sup>25</sup>

Perhaps, it is from this perplexity that the under-shepherd (ἐπίσκοπος) becomes such an important figure – spiritually and physically.<sup>26</sup> As an under-shepherd, one had the duty of physically being a part of his flock. Beyer explains as he argues, “The wandering, charismatic preachers of the Gospel, the apostles, prophets, and teachers, are never called ἐπισκοποι. This title arises only where there are settled local congregations in which regular acts are performed. For these fixed leaders of congregational life the designations → πρεσβύτεροι or ἐπίσκοποι

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<sup>24</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *An Unsettling God: The Heart of the Hebrew Bible*. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 4.

<sup>25</sup> Brueggemann further notes that the covenant relationship between God and man is “sometimes understood as a unilateral imposition on the part of YHWH and at other times as a bilateral agreement.” Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Laniak, *Shepherds After My own Heart*, 77–93.

quickly established themselves.”<sup>27</sup> A shepherd’s duty was not to be taken lightly or haphazardly. This can be appreciated rather quickly as one begins to think about sheep. Sheep tend to have a tendency to want to wander; it was only the concerned shepherd that would realize this and search for them and affectionately bring them back. It was good shepherds that would search out those that had been dispersed, and bring them back to the fold.<sup>28</sup> Beyreuther states, “The shepherd’s joy at finding his lost sheep after an anxious search is compared to God’s joy at one repentant sinner over against ninety-nine righteous.”<sup>29</sup> Why is this so important to God and His under-shepherd? Golding states it well as he contends, “Being lost is a fearful thing. Living under the likelihood that one’s basic physical needs may go unmet and experiencing continual harassment from powerful and hostile forces is quite distressing. Particularly disturbing is the prospect of becoming a scattered flock, resulting from being without a good shepherd.”<sup>30</sup> This is where the understanding of shepherd becomes so acute. Good shepherds strove to understand the “needs and characteristics of their animals,” which in turn, caused good shepherds to develop a personal relationship with these same animals.<sup>31</sup> This “shepherd-sheep relationship” can be

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<sup>27</sup> Beyer, “ἐπίσκοπος,” 615.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas A. Golding, “The Imagery of Shepherding in the Bible, Part 1,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 163 (January–March 2006): 22.

<sup>29</sup> Beyreuther, “Shepherd,” 567. Laniak enlightens why this is so important for the shepherd – it involves mercy. He states, “One of the consistent themes in Jesus’ teaching is that mercy is not only prioritized over legalism; it is the heart of the law itself. Mercy and compassion, central features of pastoral leadership, involved setting people free from their burdens.” Laniak, *Shepherds After My own Heart*, 188.

<sup>30</sup> Golding, “The Imagery of Shepherding in the Bible,” 23. Num 27:17; 1 Kgs 22:17; Jer 10:21; 23:1–4; 50:6; Eze 34:5; Nahum 3:18; Zech 10:2; Matt 9:36; 26:31; Mark 6:34; 14:27; and John 10:12. Laniak comments, “Hired shepherds in ‘the real world’ were expected to be self-sacrificing in their work, increasing a flock’s numbers by careful attention to their needs. Those who were faithful were given a modest portion of the produce as pay.” Laniak, *Shepherds After My own Heart*, 152.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas A. Golding, “The Imagery of Shepherding in the Bible, Part 2” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 163 (April–June 2006): 164–165.

corroborated through the reactions of the sheep, which include a sense of peace and contentment when all was good, and “shock, outrage, and a sense of betrayal” when all was not suitable.<sup>32</sup> It was the shepherd’s duty to interact with his sheep so that he could properly care for them.<sup>33</sup> Thomas Golding notes, “It is important to observe that the shepherd-sheep image is a highly relational one.”<sup>34</sup>

The greatest relationship known to man is his relationship with God. However, God created man so that he can have a relationship with others. According to the Bible, one of the most opportunistic places for man to cultivate his relationship with others is found in the church. Bill Hull keenly observes, “The church lives by mission as fire exists by oxygen. The church does not exist for itself.”<sup>35</sup> Yet, the church seemingly has failed in its function. This is where the under-shepherd becomes imperative. As one that has been called by God, he has the responsibility to lead the flock. This is done by his “duties” as a minister. David Rohrer explains this as he states that “in the practice of ministry is that the way I make ready a people prepared for God is simply to invite people to wake up to God.”<sup>36</sup> In other words, as a minister, one has to come to the realization that ministry has nothing to do with the person as a minister. Ministry is

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<sup>32</sup> Golding, “The Imagery of Shepherding in the Bible, Part 1,” 28.

<sup>33</sup> Interestingly, Bill Hull notes that a pastor is a good shepherd when he trains his own flock to care for others – making disciples. He states, “Disciple making creates a quality product and an effective work force. This is God’s plan for His church.” Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Pastor: The Key to Building Healthy Christians in Today’s Church* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 2005), 52. He later argues that God has a “disdain for selfish shepherds” and determines “to replace their arrogance with His lovingkindness.” *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>34</sup> Golding, “The Imagery of Shepherding in the Bible, Part 1” 26. Beyreuther observes, “This unique relationship is made possible by the shepherd’s voluntary laying down of his life, something that the hireling is unable to do.” Beyreuther, “Shepherd,” 567. (Matt 26:31; John 10).

<sup>35</sup> Hull, *The Disciples-Making Pastor*, 13.

<sup>36</sup> David Rohrer, *The Sacred Wilderness of Pastoral Ministry* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012), 32.

about caring for the needs of others by showing them how to have a relationship with God. A good shepherd desires to change the world through his relationship with God which enables him to lead God's flock to an understanding of their relationship with God. It is from this relationship that the church is able to influence the world.

People can control the world and shape the future effectively, as long as they have the right techniques. A shepherd teaches and trains God's flock, so that they can have a part in fashioning God's kingdom. Jim Horsthuis asserts that "the shepherd participates with God in providing pastoral care and leads the flock into a fuller understanding of God and his personal concern for them."<sup>37</sup> This principle that Horsthuis is exhibiting is known as a "perichoretic theology." He defines "perichoretic theology" as follows: "A perichoretic theology of leadership relieves the human emphasis inherent in management theory. Our role is to participate with God in Christ's leading of the Church by the Spirit."<sup>38</sup> God is viewed as the administrator who invites man through the Holy Spirit to become involved in His work. As a consequence, "The Triune God desires that we lead as the person he knows and delights in us to be. He does not desire that we lead as the person with the biggest church, or influence, or personality. He does desire that we lead as he does with unity and diversity of our particular selves."<sup>39</sup> Adams helps clarify what

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<sup>37</sup> Jim Horsthuis, "Participants with God: A Perichoretic Theology of Leadership," *Journal of Religious Leadership* 10/1 (2011): 104. Horsthuis expounds by saying that "leadership is viewed as participating in Christ's leading of the Church by the Spirit to the Father's glory." Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 95. Horsthuis explains how this type of relationship forms a church movement of God when he states, "A perichoretic theology of leadership begins in the interweaving movements of the Triune God. The source of pastoral leadership unifies it as our participation in what God desires and initiates." Ibid., 96. Horsthuis elsewhere states, "A perichoretic theology of leadership breathes new life into it by showing the deep personal concern God has for people as pastors participate with him in this type of pastoral leadership." Ibid., 104.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 103–104.

is being discussed here as he maintains, “The pastoral worker [shepherd] cannot escape either the need for a theology of pastoral work or the implications of theology in all that he does. If the pastor finds that he fails in his everyday dealings with men and women, he should recognize that the source of his problem may not be lack of experience, strategy or skills; in more instances than he may wish to admit, his failures may stem from shoddy or erroneous biblical understanding or theological thinking.”<sup>40</sup> Beyreuther further enlightens by stating that “Christian elders were exhorted not to be self-seeking masters over the community, but examples of service to it, so that they might pass the test when Jesus, the chief shepherd (*archipoimen*), appears (1 Pet 5:3f).”<sup>41</sup> Thus, the good shepherd is called not to a position, but as a guide to God.<sup>42</sup>

### **Beliefs and Experiences and the Under-shepherd - ἐπίσκοπος**

What a person believes in can be a rather interesting feature of his life, for there are many different ideas and notions in which to put one’s trust. Such as, ideologies, politics, opinions, people and dogmas can be placed upon a list; however, the most curious is man’s belief about God. More specifically, man’s belief of how God is involved in the world in which man lives. Man’s beliefs and his experiences somehow coincide which allows man to develop his personal

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<sup>40</sup> Adams, *Shepherding God’s Flock*, 2. Adams later states, “Ineffective and harmful approaches to the members of one’s congregation and to the community may be quite simply the result of faulty conceptions of both men and God.” Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Beyreuther, “Shepherd,” 568.

<sup>42</sup> Golding states, “It is inconceivable that a shepherd might be wise, strong, and brave, and yet not care about his flock. Thus the ideal shepherd is also one who demonstrates concern.” Golding, “The Imagery of Shepherding in the Bible,” 174. Ministers are called various things in Scripture, such as: “bond-servants” (Phil 1:1); “elders” (1 Tim 5:17); “ministers” (Rom 15:16); “overseers” (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7); “pastors” (Eph 4:11), “preachers (Rom 10:14; Eph 4:11); and “servants (2 Cor 6:4). Spears notes that “these titles refer to a function performed in the body of Christ. The title ‘reverend’ does not fit this pattern. Instead of referring to a function performed, it speaks of an attitude toward the minister.” Spears, “The Title ‘Reverend’: A Pompous Ecclesiastical Absurdity?” 5.

philosophical systems. Man's experiences seem to be the factor that conditions the belief system. Norman Geisler will explain this as he contends that not only is God engaged in the world, but that God allows man to encounter God's presence through man's experiences.<sup>43</sup> He will define experience as follows: "By experience is meant the consciousness or awareness that individuals have. Experience is the awareness of a subject but not necessarily a mere subjective awareness. That is, all experience is subjective in that it is something that subjects or individuals have."<sup>44</sup>

Experience is a key motivational factor for why a person believes in the manner that they do. A person does not believe something nonchalantly. Instead, there has to be some type of motivational factor that energizes a person to believe in the manner that they do. Take for example, a normal person does not usually walk outside on a bright and sunny day wearing a raincoat unless, he watched the news and the weather forecaster stated, "It might be sunny right now, but that is all going to change in the next few moments according to the Doppler signal." A person makes a decision because he listened to this particular forecaster before and found him or her to be accurate in his/her forecasting. The person, as a result of what he has heard, will accordingly make a determination for how he should respond to the information that has been given. This determination will most likely be made because of one's past experiences—a criteria.

People play a substantial part in facilitating one's beliefs, and these beliefs assist shaping one's understanding of experiences. This is why a shepherd becomes so significant in people's lives. Geisler sheds light on the matter as he notes that "experience is significant. Men are

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<sup>43</sup> Norman Geisler and Winfried Corduan, *Philosophy of Religion* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1988), 13–27.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

dependent, contingent creatures, and both believers and nonbelievers recognize it.”<sup>45</sup> People’s experiences generally control the way that they believe things to be. This, in turn, can frequently frustrate a person/people and lead him/them astray. This is where a shepherd truly begins to fulfill his responsibility of caring for God’s flock. A measure of his responsibility in caring, beckons for him to teach/preach to God’s flock, so that they can come to some type of resolve.<sup>46</sup> It is during this resolve that a person’s experiences and beliefs harmonize (guided by God) so that he can adjust to the world in which he lives—including one filled with all kinds of varying evil/suffering. This is where Scripture comes into play.

The shepherd’s task, before God’s flock, can be an enormous endeavor. It is his obligation for initiating a greater understanding of the Bible. This means that he has the charge, from God, to craft a message that will help fashion the beliefs of God’s flock. This undertaking can be quite daunting, since the under-shepherd comes to realize that there are many different approaches or methodologies for understanding the Bible. In other words, the shepherd comes to appreciate the fact that he will be evaluated not on his position, but by his performance – what he says, and how others have stated the same thing. Yet, it is the shepherd’s duty to enlighten God’s flock to the surety of a personal relationship with God, and the hope for a future restoration. In other words, it is the shepherd’s burden to connect the break between the original Biblical setting

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>46</sup> Prime and Begg condition, “In teaching we aim to give people an understanding of God’s truth. Beginning often with the first principles of a doctrine, we will make sure that people grasp it as best they can in all its aspects. Then in preaching we make an appeal to people’s wills, as well as to their emotions, to respond to the Word that they have now understood through teaching. To neglect this distinction between teaching and preaching creates difficulties. Considerable harm may be done to people if they are called upon to act without first possessing a proper foundation in their understanding for that action. Many have made an emotional response to preaching, and have not understood afterward what they have done. That is irresponsible of the preacher and damaging to the hearers. Preaching at its best maintains a balance between teaching and preaching.” Prime and Begg, *On Being a Pastor*, 125–126.



and today's church.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the purpose of the shepherd is to live/teach/preach Scripture intentionally with the objective of demonstrating how the entire Scripture fits together (coherence), while at the same time inquiring how and even where the past and present come together with a message (relevance).<sup>48</sup> This task is important, not for personal recognition, but for making sure that God's flock is able to become aware of His presence in today's world.<sup>49</sup> In other words, the approach that the shepherd takes is from the premise that the Bible and history interrelate and that the Bible does not just try to fit into history – coherence and relevance.

Coherency and relevancy seem to be two engines that allow truth to fly. Truth is important for the shepherd because it deliberates “ultimate reality.”<sup>50</sup> It is this “ultimate reality” in the environment that man lives, that formulates a person's beliefs which, in turn, help fashion his experience(s). Thus, the shepherd uses Scripture to help define or determine how to instruct

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<sup>47</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. *Toward An Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 186. Also see, John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.

<sup>48</sup> Peter Enns observes, “Theological exegesis of the Old and New Testament is a distinctively Christian reading that seeks coherence and relevance: coherence, meaning it seeks to understand the parts in relation to the whole; relevance, meaning it seeks to focus on the theological significance of such exegesis for the church.” Peter Enns, “Some Thoughts on Theological Exegesis of the Old Testament: Toward a Viable Model,” *Reformation and Revival* 14 (2005): 81–82. Moreover, Elmer A. Martens states, “Biblical theology attempts to embrace the message of the Bible and to arrive at an intelligible coherence of the whole despite the great diversity of the parts. Or, put another way: Biblical theology investigates the themes presented in Scripture and defines their interrelationships. Biblical theology is an attempt to get to the theological heart of the Bible.” Elmer A. Martens, “Tackling Old Testament Theology,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 20 (1977): 123. Biblical theology is a schema that attempts to show the correlation between history of man and his faith.

<sup>49</sup> Gary Bredfeldt keenly notes that “Jesus never held any position of power. He never made it to the position of king or even high priest. He lacked entrepreneurialism and never became a prominent CEO. He was never a manager or senior executive, and He certainly never rose to be a leader of an insurgent force against the occupying Romans. He was not even a religious leadership opportunist. He never led a large church or synagogue and had no resume of ladder-climbing positions. No, the fact is that He never sought nor occupied a position of authority.” Gary Bredfeldt, *Great Leader, Great Teacher: Recovering the Biblical Vision for Leadership* (Chicago: Moody, 2006), 51–52.

<sup>50</sup> James Emery White, *What is Truth?* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2006), 4–11.

man how he should live his life.<sup>51</sup> Not in some kind of positional manner, but in a style resembling that of Jesus.<sup>52</sup> Jesus lived in His community and associated with people. He used real life experience(s) and beliefs, and allowed His teaching to mold “ultimate reality.” Bredfeldt writes that “Jesus came teaching. His method of leadership was to draw disciples or students around Him and then teach them. He taught using parables and metaphors.”<sup>53</sup> What is interesting is that Jesus was Jesus. While He is the Son of God, He did not raise His status above His listeners. Conversely, if one stops to think, all of the shepherds that were called by God were nothing but ordinary men. Moses was Moses, Abraham was Abraham, David was David, Paul was Paul, Peter was Peter, Isaiah was Isaiah, etc.; each of these individuals were themselves. They were not known by titles (i.e, Prophet Moses, Father Abraham, King David, Apostle Paul, Disciple or Apostle Peter, Prophet Isaiah, etc.). While some had elevated status, none of them seem to have exalted their position.<sup>54</sup> They were men who each had joys and sorrows correspondingly, and shared on a personal level with all of those that would listen. The whole notion of shepherd is to use Scripture and discover the workings of God and how He desires

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<sup>51</sup> David L. Larsen, *Telling The Old, Old Story: The Art of Narrative Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1995), 73–89. Daniel L. Akin, Bill Curtis, and Stephen Rummage, *Engaging Exposition* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2011), 10–14.

<sup>52</sup> John Piper, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2002), 1–4.

<sup>53</sup> Bredfeldt, *Great Leader, Great Teacher*, 55. Elsewhere, Bredfeldt comments, “Teachers lead when they teach in such a way as to free learners by the power of the truth. Likewise, leaders lead most powerfully when they tell and teach the truth. The greatest of leaders are more like Jesus than Jack. Their leadership is seen in their ability to free people by teaching the truth of the Word of God, not in their ability to grow an enterprise.” *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>54</sup> Bredfeldt profoundly asserts, “Unfortunately, for many churches and their leaders, the shepherding role has been separated from the teaching function of the role. Leadership has been redefined as vision-casting, executive leadership, and influence.” *Ibid.*, 59. Jim Means states it well as he declares, “Spiritual servant-leaders must realize that the central tasks that define their roles have to do with study, prayer, modeling, discipling, preaching, teaching, and equipping the saints for ministry.” Jim Means, *Leadership in Christian Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 53–54.

to relate with man. Karl Barth will aptly argue, “Any escape out of the constraint of the Word of God means crossing over to the false gods and no-gods.”<sup>55</sup>

### Conclusion

Entitlement can be enticing and enjoyable; however, it can also create a basis for failure.<sup>56</sup> Take an ordinary person with no outstanding qualities to them, and put a title with them – say police officer. From a person’s experience, one would expect that person to enforce and uphold the law. However, suppose that same person does nothing when a crime has been committed. Those that are aware of his/her credentials become disenchanted when he/she does nothing. The title creates an awareness of obligation, either intentionally or unintentionally. The same understanding can be said of a pastor, preacher, or reverend. These titles create a cognizance from people that implies expectation or performance.<sup>57</sup> However, Christ teaches that man (especially those that have been called) is to be a servant to His people. Laniak summarizes this well as he states, “To be a shepherd is to be both responsible for (the flock) and responsible

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<sup>55</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*. Vol. II/1 (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 2000), 7. He states, “God speaks to man in His Word. Thereby He gives Himself to him to be known; therein He is known by him.” Ibid., 44. Later he will write, “God’s revelation is not in our power, and therefore not at our command. God’s revelation takes place among us and for us, in the sphere of our experience and of our thinking. But it has to be seriously accepted that it happens as a movement ‘from God.’” Ibid., 69.

<sup>56</sup> Laniak avers that “abuse of power was, fundamentally, a failure to understand the character of YHWH; care of the needy is ‘what it means to know me’ (Jer 23:16).” Laniak, *Shepherds After My own Heart*, 135. Bredfeldt notes, “God does establish offices in the church and appoints leaders to those offices. Those leaders have divinely granted positional power. But God also calls for a consistency between the character and lifestyle of those leaders and the office they hold. That is why the qualifications for the office of elder or deacon are predominately about the matters of character and spirituality (1Tim 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9).” Bredfeldt, *Great Leader, Great Teacher*, 60.

<sup>57</sup> Hull, *The Disciples-Making Pastor*, 86–90.

to (the Owner).”<sup>58</sup> He is to shepherd His flock in the same manner that He as the Good Shepherd did – willing to lay down his life for his friends. Pastoring is not about a position, rather is it about a calling upon one’s life to do the work of the Lord. Shepherd – Pastor has one grave obligation and that is to take substantial care of God’s flock.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Laniak, *Shepherds After My own Heart*, 248. He elucidates by noting, “Authority is a feature of the shepherd’s role, but one comprehensively qualified by the reminder that elders are caring for the flock of God. There is no room for pretense in the service of the divine Shepherd. Elders ‘have no proprietary rights.’ The fundamental issue here is accountability, as it is in Acts 20:28 and Hebrew 13:17.” Ibid., 233–234.

<sup>59</sup> Adams, *Shepherding God’s Flock*, 5.

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