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**Assignment: Analyze the most significant Scriptural models of pastoral care given to us
and assess their relevance and implications for Christian ministry today.**

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Introduction

Biblical paradigms of leadership suggest that this is a response to a divine call to be in the service of God's love and justice. This paradigm reveals a theology of leadership which focuses on a pattern of God calling leaders to one mission enterprise, to be in the service and restoration of God's image in everyone and in everything.

Henry J.M. Nouwen has been said: "Much Christian Leadership is exercised by people who do not know how to develop healthy, intimate relationships and have opted for power and control instead"^[1].

When we look at the churches today we can see that the new model for pastoral ministry imitates the corporate world, transforming pastors into entrepreneurs and churches into business organizations. Many pastors have been metamorphosed into a company of shopkeepers, and the shops they keep are churches. The vocabulary for discussing the church has been infected with corporate jargon. There are many pastors preoccupied with keeping their members happy, luring their members away from other churches down the street and finding methods to motivate their members to give more money. ^[2] Concern for appearance dominates our culture, and pastors are not immune to that concern. Bowing to the culture's idea of desirable leadership, by emphasizing the leaders' abilities as managers and minimizing their role as pastors, puts the church leadership in dangerous territory. Furthermore, we, as the church, must decide whether our perception of ourselves and our call will be cultural or biblical.

This essay will analyse the most significant Scriptural models of leadership and pastoral care and will assess their relevance and implication for contemporary Christian ministry.

1. God as the Chief Shepherd.

The theme and symbolism of the shepherd, together with the idea of God acting as the Shepherd of His people, is a motif found throughout the Bible, from beginning to end. The shepherd parallel is a *pivotal analogy* in Scripture, an analogy which underlines all forms of leadership in the context of the Old Testament Israel. ^[3]

The shepherd image as applied to God first appears in Jacob's blessing for his grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh (*Genesis 48: 15*) and his own sons (*Genesis 49*). At the end of his life, Jacob, in his blessings, reflected on his relationship with God and spoke about "*God who has*

¹ Henri J.M. Nouwen, 1989, *In the Name of Jesus*, New York, Crossroad, , p.20. U.S.A.

² Eugene H. Peterson, 1993, *Working the Angles – The Shape of Pastoral Integrity*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, pp. 2-3

³ Thomas C. Oden, 1983, *Pastoral Theology – Essentials of Ministry*, Harper Collins, pp.49-54

been my Shepherd all my life to this day".^[4] Jacob declared that Joseph's ability to endure hardship was "because of the hand of the Mighty One of Jacob, because of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel." (*Genesis 49: 24*).

This was an affirmation about God to which not only Jacob but also all the people of God in the Old Testament would gladly have assented. It was not unusual for them to speak about God as "*the Shepherd*", and the evidence that they saw God as their Shepherd who *called, led, pastured, healed* and *carried* his people is to be found everywhere.

God's actions of shepherding His people are a continuous endeavor. When Jacob is describing his father's behavior before God, he uses a verb form that conveys a completed action, but when he describes God's behavior toward himself, he uses participles, which express continuous actions, either in present time, or in past time. God has shepherded (*ro'eh*) him, and delivered (*go'el*) him.^[5] From Rebecca's womb to his deathbed in Egypt, Jacob testifies that God has been there with him, leading him, liberating him and caring about him.

Despite Jacob's many failings of character and conduct, he was aware that his life had had purpose and meaning, because God had taken him in His hand. Jacob had spent his life shepherding, and was not slow to recognize the God's shepherding care in his own experience. God had rescued him from Laban and Esau and had brought him home safely, according to his promise. The "angel of God" who had so protected him he calls his *redeemer* (*go'el*). A redeemer is one who stepped in to rescue a relative in times of trouble.

The belief in a shepherd God has served as the foundation for all their prayers and hopes. At 147 years of age Jacob could look back and, as a shepherd himself, see clearly that he had been a wandering and, at times, a lost sheep, but God had been as near to him as a beloved spiritual Shepherd, so that at the end of his life he knew that God was still caring for him.

The title Shepherd is used of God in the context of His protection of the nation. The parallelism emphasizes the strength possessed by the Shepherd to carry out his protection, and is further underlined by reference to God as the "stone" or "the Rock of Israel". God's *presence* and God's *protection* were the ways in which God shepherded Jacob all his life. So even before Israel became a nation, when Israel was just Jacob, the individual, God was the Shepherd of his people, providing His sovereign presence and omnipotent protection. God ensured the fulfillment of His original promises to Abraham, regarding a future nation and a land.

⁴ All Bible's quotations are from New Revised Standard Version with Apocrypha, 1989, Oxford University Press.

⁵ W. E. Vine, Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Thomas Nelson Publishers, New York, 1985, pp. 227-228 and John Joseph Owens, 1989, Analytical Key to the Old Testament, vol. 1, Genesis-Joshua, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, pp. 225-226.

The statements made by Jacob imply a profound yet practical relationship between Jacob and the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel. He understood well the tender care expressed by this analogy, one that further illuminated his own identity and relationship with God.

As a close parallel to the pastoral/shepherding imagery, there is a vivid and touching picture of God as “Father” in the book of Hosea (cap. 11). God’s love for His people, however, was not a sentimental and indulgent affection which permitted anything and everything. The fatherly role of God is spelled out in detail in other parts of the Old Testament: bringing *comfort* and *security* (*Psalms 68: 4-6*), showing *understanding* and *compassion* (*Psalms 103:13*), exercising *discipline* and *guidance* (*Proverbs 3: 12*), *gathering* his children around Him, and *supplying* their needs (*Jeremiah 31: 7 – 10*).

Human ministry can never be more than a pale and partial reflection of that divine ministry. God the Shepherd, Redeemer and Father should be the defining paradigm for all the relationships and functions of the pastor to his flock. ^[6]

2. Abraham, a leader of faith

The story of Abraham represents the earliest record of leadership and pastoral care in the Bible. Abraham’s leadership begins with an act of faith. By divine destiny, Abraham is required to begin a journey of faith to an alternative future, a future which will bless all families of the earth.

We learn from the experience of Abraham that being a “pastoralist-shepherd-nomad-merchant man” ^[7] suddenly assigns those in his family the *roles of warriors*; he would make decisions which will bring the greatest amount of *well-being* and *security* to the group which he headed, and thus he must avoid any approach that will generate violence and threaten their well-being. ^[8]

Leadership is a faith venture which will involve some risks; therefore a response to God’s call will prove impossible without a foundation of faith. Leadership response to faith is not an intellectual assent to a proposition; it is risking that the purpose to which God calls us is worthy of trust and service.

Throughout the centuries of Christian theological development, Abraham stands, as a pivotal symbol of leadership that is both faithful and fruitful. Much of the New Testament theology is an interpretation of the meaning of Abraham’s faith and leadership: “Abraham believed God, it was reckoned to him as righteousness” (*Romans 4:3b*). Abraham’s faith is

⁶ Derek J. Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds-Explorations in pastoral theology*, Apollos, 1997, pp. 32-33

⁷ Victor P. Hamilton, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament - The book of Genesis* chap. 1 – 17, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, p. 392 and pp. 433-434

⁸ Claus Westermann, *The Genesis Accounts of Creation*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1968, p. 176

rewarded, and the New Testament initiates an alternative community around Abraham's model of leadership.

2. Moses, a shepherd leader of the people of Israel

From God's perspective, shepherding was obviously a good introduction to leadership: "You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron" (*Psalms* 77: 20). Throughout the Old and the New Testament shepherding is a metaphor for leadership, whether political or spiritual. Ancient Near Eastern kings used the shepherd motif to describe their relationship with their people. The seventh-century (B.C.) Assyrian king Esarhaddon, for example, identified himself as '*the true shepherd*'.^[9]

As the paradigm shepherd and prophet of Israel, Moses was the hand and voice of God to the people. They were to follow his voice.^[10] God called Moses to leadership as a liberator with prophetic and redemptive hope for the children of Israel. He is considered as the archetypal Jewish leader. According to the interpretation^[11] of biblical accounts, there were three main qualities that made Moses God's chosen leader:

- His sense of justice, which he practiced no matter what the consequence;
- His ability to see the needs of others and his willingness to set aside his own needs for theirs;
- His ability to lead, in adverse as well as in favourable circumstances, as a shepherd who leads a flock.

He demonstrated that he could lead as a true shepherd, not only as one who overcomes adversaries and enemies but also in situations in which the nature presented the barrier to God's people. He was not indifferent in the face of injustice. Whatever consequences he faced, he felt obligated to act in a manner meant to undo or correct the injustice. He was a shepherd uniquely prepared and called by God to undertake his task. It was his task to *make known the covenant stipulations as God had revealed them to him* and he did make them known in all their moral, social and theological details.^[12]

⁹ The Assyrian text reads, "Esarhaddon, great king, legitimate king, king of the world, king of Assyria, regent of Babylon, king of Summer and Akkad, king of the four rims (of the earth), *the true shepherd*," in James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 3rd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), p. 289.

¹⁰ "Moses is the extension of God's rule in their lives, the means of their provision, and the agent of their deliverance, [his hands] became an extension of the 'hands of God' leading his people". Timothy S Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible*, in *New Studies in Biblical Theology*, ed. D. A. Carson, Inter Varsity Press, 2006, p. 87.

¹¹ Raymond E. Brown, S.S. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J. Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm. - *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 1990 translated in Romanian as: *Introducere si Comentariu la Sfanta Scriptura*, Galaxia Gutemberg, 2007, pp. 195-200.

¹² Arthur W. Pink – *Gleanings in Exodus*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1982, pp. 170-174

As a direct result of his intimate relationship with God, Moses is presented as a *man of intercession*. His faith was so undivided that he was able to experience many remarkable and immediate answers to his requests. Moses stood before God as the *representative of the people* and before the people as the *representative of God*.

Furthermore, he was the leader who *called his people to decision*. He was possessed by a desire to persuade God's people to do that which was right, but at the same time his human nature and limitations serve as great encouragement to others whom God has called to lead His flock. Moses was a gifted man, but it was only by God's grace that he lived to exercise those gifts. ^[13] The task of leadership did not prove to be unchallenging Moses among the Hebrews, and he was often frustrated by the idolatry and corrupt vision of God's purpose in the midst of the people of Israel.

Moses' most unselfish response to the revelation of God's will in his life took place when he was told by God that he would not enter in the Promised Land. He responded not by pleading for himself and for his entrance in Canaan, but by pleading with God on behalf of the people, that they may not be left without a leader. It was precisely this attitude of his that demonstrated his unwavering commitment to God's people and his resolute concern for the "sheep" in his care.

3. David, the shepherd king of Israel

One of the most famous shepherd-leaders of the Israelites was, without a doubt, King David. He learned the actual art of shepherding his father's flock early in life, which prepared him for the awesome task of shepherding a nation as their king. David represents the best of monarchical leadership in the history of Israel. ^[14] He stands as a figure displaying heroic attributes, a military genius, a good administrator, a talented musician, an inspired poet, a shaper of the life of God's people. The story of David's leadership is a paradigm for all those who yearn for pastoral responsibility and social and spiritual transformation. "With upright heart he tended them and guided them with skilful hand" (*Psalms* 78:72). This vision of shepherding calls us to a life and ministry of compassion.

The man who is shepherd of God's people must know that he is a guardian of God's fame, a fact in which he should find tremendous confidence. If God is wholly committed to the honour of His own Name, than to stand for God's fame, is to stand in the right place.

The irony of David's leadership is that while initially Israel was fascinated by him, deeply attracted to him, later, they were embarrassed and bewildered by David's incredible

¹³ Derek J. Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds-Explorations in pastoral theology*, Apollos, 1997, pp. 39-40

¹⁴ Gordon J. Keddie, Welwyn Commentary Series, *Dawn of a Kingdom - The message of 1 Samuel*, Evangelical Press, Hertfordshire, England, 1988, pp. 158-159

moral miscalculations, adultery and conspiratorial actions that lead to murder. David's leadership is a mixture of *public responsibility* and *power*, personal temptation and deception. The God with whom David has to do is a God who will not permit leaders to choose to shape their own reality. David's public facade as a great leader is broken by the depth of moral pain. David is close enough to the wilderness faith-tradition of Moses to accept the judgment of God upon his life. From David we learn a vital leadership lesson: *public power will not solve personal issues*. With leadership comes public and private accountability, and justice is a community concern rather than merely an individual concern.

But what set David apart, what made him the most beloved king in Israel's history, was his *vision*, both for himself and his people, a vision that grew out of his faith in God. David placed God's wishes and laws before his own personal ambitions, and he inspired a similar dedication in his followers. ^[15] Despite many challenges and setbacks, he was a man of *courage*; he had a deep *faith* and trust in God; and he loved and *cared* for his people.

4. Nehemiah, a model of leadership for reconstruction

Nehemiah had a compelling social *vision for rebuilding the people of God*. He was an ordinary man underneath who emerged as one of the most significant leaders in history. He was a *man of character, highly motivated* to do, for God, a job that had many difficult circumstances surrounding it.

Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and *rebuilding the people's confidence and faith in the purpose of God* were formidable projects. Nehemiah performed both projects well. His vision of reconstruction was *practical, resourceful, and transformational*. ^[16]

Nehemiah met opposition with courage and imagination, as nothing was permitted to stop God's work, illustrating the principle that self-determined leaders are able to remain focus despite many distractions. ^[17] Nehemiah's model of leadership reveals that the longing for reconstruction comes from the grief that arises from looking out over the city with a vision from God. The energy for rebuilding comes from the deep desire and commitment to glorify the Name of God. We learn from the leadership of Nehemiah that the successful leaders know to handle themselves in solitude. ^[18]

¹⁵ Gordon J. Keddie, *Triumph of the King – The message of 2 Samuel*, Evangelical Press, England, 1990, pp. 63-65

¹⁶ Charles F. Fensham, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, The books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1982, pp.206-208

¹⁷ Terry Virgo, *Man of Destiny*, Kingsway Publications, Eastbourne, 1988, pp. 151-159

¹⁸ Charles R. Swindoll, *Hand me another brick – Principles of effective leadership*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1978.

5. Jesus, the Good Shepherd for all believers

The Good Shepherd is a pericope found in John 10:1-21, in which Jesus is depicted as the Good Shepherd who lay down His life for his sheep. Jesus uses the similarity of the Good Shepherd to differentiate his ministry from that of false shepherds and to stress the voluntary nature of His sacrifice for His people.

The leadership of Jesus is seen by Christian theologians as the incarnation of the reign of God. God is the Shepherd of Israel (*Psalms 80:1; 23:1; Isaiah 40:10-11*), which gives us a measure of the responsibility of His under-shepherds. ^[19]

The shepherd was an autocrat over his flock, and passages where the shepherd imagery is used to emphasize the thought of sovereignty are not lacking. Jesus, however, declared that His shepherding is benevolent, not oppressive. He is, thus, presented as the true Ruler of His people, in contrast to all false shepherds. ^[20]

When He thinks of himself as the Good Shepherd, He sets Himself in contrast with the hireling shepherds. As the Good Shepherd, He is the one who *cares for the sheep* and *provides for their salvation* at the cost of His life. The Good Shepherd has a passion for His sheep and He is involved in their circumstances. There is a relationship of reciprocal knowledge, not a superficial knowledge, but an intimate one.

Noteworthy is the fact that, while a shepherd does many things dutifully for his flock, when Jesus speaks of Himself in His capacity as the Good Shepherd, he immediately goes on to stipulate “The Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep”. (*John 10: 11*) ^[21]

Jesus is not one among many good shepherds. A good shepherd does not naturally give his life for the sheep. If ever a good shepherd died for his sheep, that was, in all probability, an accident. The death of the shepherd for his sheep means disaster for his flock. With Jesus, however, death for His sheep was his set purpose. ^[22] The great act of care for the sheep that He is impressing on his hearers by this image is that of laying down His life.

The care of a good shepherd for his sheep may be tender and loving, but the intimacy of Jesus’ care for us, His church, is not simply that of a shepherd for sheep. Rather, it is the intimate relationship as the one shared by Christ with His Father.

¹⁹ Leon Morris, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament, The Gospel according to John* (revised), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1995, p.443

²⁰ Alan Richardson, *The Gospel according to Saint John, The Torch Bible Commentaries*, London, 1959, considered that we must, clearly understand that ‘shepherd’ in biblical phraseology means ‘ruler’, and John is claiming that Jesus is the ideal ruler of prophetic expectation. The same verb is used in Matt. 2:6 in quotation from Micah 5:2 to describe the activity of the messianic ruler.

²¹ William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of John – New Testament Commentary*, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987, pp.

²² J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospel of John*, vol. 2, The Benner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1987, pp. 211-215.

The Gospels also point forward to the day when, as the “Great Shepherd,” He will act in judgement, separating the sheep from the goats, alluding to the role of the Perfect Shepherd, who knows his sheep and is known by them.

Shepherding the flock of God and its implication for today

God sees the church as His flock and the individual people as His sheep. This is not the only image for pastoral work and ministry, but it is the dominant one. Pastors are called to know and act on these biblical images when caring for the saints. Their relationship with the sheep must be moulded by the image of the shepherd and his sheep. Pastors are to shepherd the flocks in their care and to represent the Chief Shepherd. (*1Peter 5:2-4*)

The focus of a good shepherd was to be on his flock, their provision, guidance and safety. The epitome of the bad shepherds, in Ezekiel’s expose of Israel’s leaders of his day (*34:1-6*), sketches out in vivid terms, what it looked like when leaders failed to provide this care. These leaders were slaughtering their sheep for their own gain rather than feeding them. Rather than caring for the flock, they treated them with *force and severity*.

The shepherd’s task in today’s context

a) Pastoral care involves shepherding the flock. Nourishing and providing a balanced and healthy diet is a primary shepherding task. Pastoral care is that part of the pastor’s work which is equated to shepherding; that is, bringing the flock and the individuals closer to God. Despite our failings and our weaknesses, as pastors, we have the task of caring for our Saviour’s flock. Shepherding involves protection, tending to needs, strengthening the weak, encouragement, feeding the flock, making provision, shielding, refreshing, restoring, comforting, guiding, and leading by example to move people on their pursuit of holiness. ^[23] We are to do the shepherding that the Chief Shepherd would be doing if He were physically here.

b) Pastoral care involves a heart for people. By our actions as shepherds we should demonstrate compassion and a loving attitude not only for the sheep individually, but also for the flock corporately. Some of the most productive pastoral care takes place around the fringe of the membership. On the fringe are people who have been in the core but are drifting away, those who are struggling with various issues, those who have recently come to faith, and those who are discovering the truth of the gospel. These people may be longing for love and peace with God but life’s wounds are inflicted in many ways: unkind words, abuse, death, divorce, loss of a job,

²³ Thomas C. Oden, 1983, *Pastoral Theology – Essentials of Ministry*, Harper Collins, pp.52-53

moral failure, running from God, lost friends, and church divisions. These church members may have been lost for a period, being the victims of predators. In these predicaments, they may have felt the sting of loneliness, as there was no one to search for them. The result was a state of confusion, fear and even the hesitation to commit to another congregation. They may be carrying hurts, unforgiveness, strongly held views that may be injuring them, and they may need extra time and support until their inner life would be healed. Having a heart for people means to move out from behind the pulpit into the lives of harassed and helpless people, bringing God to them, in the ordinary time and space particulars of their lives. ^[24] Pastoral care means to care for them, and care for their entire personality: intellectual, spiritual and physical.

c) *Pastoral care must be characterized by mental agility.* Every congregation is made up of groups from diverse walks of life. Each has a different personality, each will respond differently to Bible teaching, pastoral activity and events or changes within the church.

By its very nature, the church comprises a large range of people: young and old, rich and poor, males and females, those with families and those without. Some will be introvert and some extrovert, some will hate change and some will love change. Some of the members will love to participate in planning activities, while others prefer to do the actual work. In reality, some will be more committed to God and to the church while others will prefer to distance themselves from the congregation.

All of the above come in combinations, with the complications of personality, life history and family links. What is vital and important in all of this is a clear understanding of the pastor's objective: to bring people closer to God, to see Christ replicated in their lives, and to see them active in worship and in the service that God has given them to do. ^[25] As pastors, we must work with God to achieve His purposes in all of His sheep. This requires us to be inspired by His Spirit and to have a mind connected with Him, so that we may be able to work together, in spite of the great diversity of people and problems. Regardless of the particular circumstances, the pastor is called to speak God's words, using the gifts with which God has endowed him, allowing himself to be guided by the Holy Spirit, and allowing God to make his experience relevant in various situations for good of the flock.

²⁴ John W. Frye, *Jesus the Pastor – Leading others in the character & Power of Christ*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000, pp. 83-96

²⁵ Harold Rowdon, *Serving God's People – Re-thinking Christian Ministry Today*, Paternoster Press, London, 2002, pp. 60-68

d) *Pastoral care involves skilful hands.* Identifying the shepherd metaphor as central to the pastoring task does not imply that managerial skills are not necessary. Pastoral care involves those abilities to evaluate information, formulate a plan, recruit gifted workers, secure resources, make decisions, and bring the plan to completion. ^[26] David was good example in this regard, and Psalm 78 speaks of the managerial dimension of King David's shepherding of Israel: "...and guided them with skilful hand" (v. 72). The pastor cannot lead by demand, but must lead by example and influence. Relationships take time in order to for confidence and trust to be built.

e) *Pastoral care involves honesty, conviction, devotion.* In the ministry of pastoral care as shepherds, we need to posses a very sharp and honest spirit of observation. At times, pastoral care requires a fearless determination and taking of strong measures to stand firm. But sharp, honest spirit of observation and deep courageous convictions must be tempered with devotions. ^[27] Any leader involved in pastoral care must maintain a balance between standing for the truth and keeping his heart open and warm before the Lord.

f) *Pastoral care involved a price.* As a shepherd in the ministry of care, the pastor is responsible to be an watchman that pays close attention to the various conditions of the flock; he is a guard against any potential threats to the sheep; he is to be a guide by leading the flock, an action that reflects the care of the Lord in Psalm 23; he is a physician who remains concerned for the physical and spiritual well-being of his people; he is a *saviour* in the sense that he seeks out those straying and finds those lost; the shepherd is to feed his flock by nourishing them with the word of truth and he is responsible to love the people, even if he were called to lay down his own life for the flock.

Conclusion

The clear pattern set forth in the narratives of Abraham, Moses, David, Nehemiah, and in the parables of our Lord Jesus Christ, teaches that the task of shepherding God's flock is a mission that lies very close to the heart of God.

²⁶ David W. Wiersbe, *The Dynamics of Pastoral Care*, Baker Book, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000, pp.42-54.

²⁷ David Roper, *A Burden Shared – Encouragement for Leaders*, Discovery House Publishers, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1991, pp. 163-166

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