



Love Others To Jesus

When Shepherds Wound the Sheep

Finding Healing After Unhealthy Church Leadership

***"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life
for the sheep."***

John 10:11 (NKJV)

A Love Others To Jesus resource



Introduction

A biblical resource for recognizing unhealthy leadership without losing confidence in Christ.

The local church is God's idea. Jesus established it, purchased it with His own blood, and continues to build it today. Most pastors faithfully love Christ and serve His people with humility, sacrifice, and joy.

Yet Scripture also warns that not every spiritual leader faithfully shepherds God's people. Throughout both the Old and New Testaments, God confronts leaders who abuse authority, seek personal recognition, neglect the flock, or use their position for selfish gain.

Important Perspective

This resource is not a guide for diagnosing personality disorders. It is a biblical guide for recognizing unhealthy patterns, caring for wounded believers, and keeping Jesus Christ at the center.

If you have experienced hurt from unhealthy church leadership, this resource is for you. Our purpose is not to criticize pastors or encourage division. Instead, we want to help hurting believers recognize biblical leadership, find healing through Christ, and continue loving the church that Jesus loves.

An unhealthy shepherd should never cause you to lose confidence in the Good Shepherd.





God's Design for Shepherds

Biblical leadership reflects the heart of Jesus: serving, protecting, teaching, and pointing people to Christ.

Jesus described Himself as the Good Shepherd. Peter instructed church leaders to “shepherd the flock of God” and to lead by example rather than domination (1 Peter 5:2–3).

A Healthy Shepherd

- Serves people
- Leads by example
- Welcomes accountability
- Points people to Christ
- Seeks unity
- Humbly receives correction

An Unhealthy Leader

- Uses people
- Leads through fear
- Avoids accountability
- Draws attention to self
- Creates unhealthy dependence
- Treats questions as attacks

The issue is not perfection but direction. Healthy pastors continually point people to Jesus rather than themselves.





Recognizing Unhealthy Patterns

Look for repeated fruit and patterns rather than rushing to labels.

It is unwise to casually label a pastor with psychological terminology. Scripture gives us a better starting point: examine the fruit of leadership and the culture it produces.

- Members become afraid to ask honest questions.
- Loyalty to the pastor becomes more important than loyalty to Christ.
- Transparency disappears and accountability weakens.
- The leader consistently refuses correction or treats questions as attacks.
- Fear replaces joy and people learn to protect themselves.
- Staff members or volunteers repeatedly leave under strain.
- The church gradually revolves around one personality instead of Christ.

A Helpful Rule

One difficult conversation does not prove unhealthy leadership. Consistent patterns over time tell a much clearer story.

Ask: Does this leadership consistently move people closer to Jesus - or closer to one individual?





Healing After Church Hurt

Wounds caused in a spiritual setting can cut deeply, but they do not have to define your future.

When spiritual leaders fail, the pain often reaches beyond disappointment. Trust can be shaken, relationships can be strained, and even familiar parts of church life can feel different.

- Give yourself permission to grieve what was lost.
- Seek wise, mature believers who will listen without feeding bitterness.
- Remember that Jesus did not fail because one of His servants failed.
- Forgive as Christ leads you, while still practicing wisdom and appropriate boundaries.
- Do not allow disappointment to become isolation from God's people.

Hold On To This

Forgiveness does not require pretending the hurt never happened. Healing can include truth, wisdom, accountability, and grace at the same time.

Never allow an unhealthy shepherd to convince you that the Good Shepherd is untrustworthy.





Cultivating a Healthy Church

Healthy churches are cultivated as pastors and members follow Jesus together.

Healthy churches are not built by perfect pastors or perfect members. They are built by ordinary believers who are committed to following Jesus together.

If you've experienced unhealthy leadership, it can be tempting to become cynical or suspicious. Resist that temptation. Instead, ask how you can help cultivate the kind of church that reflects the heart of Christ.

Healthy churches are marked by several characteristics:

- **Christ is the focus.** The mission is to make disciples, not elevate personalities.
- **Scripture is the authority.** Decisions are measured by God's Word rather than personal preferences.
- **Leaders are accountable.** Pastors, deacons, and ministry leaders recognize that they ultimately answer to God and welcome biblical accountability.
- **Grace and truth walk together.** Sin is addressed honestly, but people are treated with love and dignity.
- **Servanthood is celebrated.** The greatest leaders are those who faithfully serve others.
- **Unity is protected.** Members refuse to allow gossip, division, or personal agendas to distract from the mission of the church.





Every Member Matters

Church health is not only a leadership responsibility. Every believer contributes to the culture of the congregation.

Every member contributes to the health of the church.



Pray for your pastors.



Encourage your leaders.



Speak the truth in love.



Support biblical accountability.



Serve with humility.



Extend grace to others just as Christ has extended grace to you.

No church this side of heaven will ever be perfect. Every congregation is made up of redeemed sinners who are still growing in Christ. The goal is not to find a flawless church, but to be part of a church that continually seeks to honor Jesus, follow His Word, and love one another well.

A Healthy Church Culture

Healthy churches are not created by extraordinary leaders alone. They are cultivated by ordinary believers who are committed to following an extraordinary Savior.





A Word to Pastors

Pastoral ministry is a sacred calling and a serious stewardship.

Every pastor should regularly invite the Lord to search his heart and examine the way he leads. Humility is not weakness. Accountability is not opposition. Both are gifts that help shepherds remain faithful.

Questions for honest self-examination

- ☐ Am I easy to approach?
- ☐ Can I admit when I am wrong?
- ☐ Do I receive correction with humility?
- ☐ Would my staff describe me as safe?
- ☐ Would my family describe me as humble?
- ☐ Am I building Christ's Kingdom or protecting my own reputation?
- ☐ Would people say they are following Jesus - or following me?

Faithful shepherds do not need to be perfect. They need to remain teachable, accountable, and willing to repent when they are wrong.

The Goal of Faithful Leadership

Help people love Jesus more than they love the pastor. The shepherd's task is to make Christ visible, not himself indispensable.





Our Hope Remains

The church belongs to Jesus Christ, and He has never abandoned His people.

Healthy churches still exist. Faithful pastors still serve. Broken hearts can heal. Trust can be rebuilt. Most importantly, Jesus Christ has never failed His people.

Healthy churches still exist.

Faithful pastors still serve.

Broken hearts can heal.

Christ remains the Good Shepherd.

1 Peter 5:4 (NKJV)

“And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.”

Reflection Questions

1. What have I learned about biblical shepherding?
2. Have I allowed someone's failure to affect my view of Christ?
3. What qualities should mark healthy spiritual leadership?
4. How can I pursue forgiveness without ignoring wisdom?
5. How can I pray for the pastors and leaders serving my church today?

***Healthy churches are not built around extraordinary personalities.
They are built around an extraordinary Savior. Keep your eyes on
Jesus.***

