



Exploring Jesus as Shepherd based on John 10:11-13: The basics of today's Christian Leadership

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Abstract

The Lord Jesus as a good shepherd taught and imitated the model of leadership. This model becomes the standard for Christian leaders in carrying out church services and in the conduct of their operations. This study aims to describe the meaning and characteristics of a 'good shepherd' according to John 10:11-13, and to convey the principles of pastoral leadership and provide an analysis of studies that produce reflections to ponder upon for today's leadership. This study used a qualitative descriptive method with a literature study approach based on relevant literature from academic journal articles, online media, books, and other relevant literature. The findings of the study are that it is necessary to carry out a transformation for contemporary church leaders and pastors so that they can become good shepherds according to the Lord Jesus notion of stewards. Some important steps that can be taken are to let go of one's ego and personal interests, and to direct the focus of the ministry upon the interests of the congregation. The leader should also seek various forms of church activities to fulfill the needs of the faithful and seek the salvation of their souls. In summary, it can be stated that it is necessary to change the direction of the ministry's focus from personal interests to the interests of the congregation in general and community at large.

Keywords: Christian shepherd, church pastor, shepherd leadership, leadership, John 10.

Introduction

In today's world, believers face a myriad of challenges and problems in the increasingly complex life of the church and life in general. One of the issues that arise is the problem of church leadership. Developments in the current era are helping to drive change, leading to a widespread



leadership crisis. In the church environment, the quality of service is declining due to a severe leadership crisis (Budiman et al., 2021) Sendjaya is of the opinion that there is a leadership crisis in the Christian world, even though the church should be a place to produce loyal, knowledgeable, and dedicated leaders. Other evidence of the problem of church leadership is the emergence of various suicide cases that befell several pastors who are leaders of large churches (Sendjaya, 2004) including amongst others Jarid Wilson, Darrin Patrick, Jim Howard and Andrew Stoecklein. This is certainly a surprising and ironic fact for the Christian world, especially when viewed from the point of view of leadership qualities (Marisi et al., 2020) By the teachings of the Holy Bible, it has been clearly stated that a Christian leader is required to have almost perfect qualities as in the example of the Lord Jesus Christ who declared himself to be a 'shepherd' for His people or *laos* (nation) (John 10:14)(Melati et al., 2023; Nicolaidis, 2010).

The leadership model of the Lord Jesus is the best leadership model to emulate in the history of human life. Today's church leadership is required to actualize the leadership model of the Lord Jesus as a 'good shepherd'. Leadership requires a real example which is manifested through humility, willingness, sincere dedication, and above all faith (Irawati et al., 2021). The writer to Hebrews states that a leader as a person is responsible for guarding the soul of the church and must give an account for it (Hebrews 13:17) therefore the development of the faith of the church is very dependent on leadership. The pattern set can refer to various leadership characteristics found in the Bible (Samarena & Siahaan, 2019). The leadership in the illustration of the 'good shepherd' that the Lord Jesus taught is a summary of all the leadership patterns in the Bible. This pattern is the main reference for carrying out church leadership throughout the ages. The leadership of the church and all ecclesiastical institutions must be connected or based on the leadership role model, namely Jesus Christ (Wijaya, 2018a). By applying the leadership model of the Lord Jesus, the shepherd will be far more likely to succeed in guiding, directing, and guiding the congregation to be Christlike (Lontoh & Chia, 2023).

Jesus' sheep are pulled into the harmony of love and knowledge between the Father and Son. They will, like the Son, select to live in love. Then there is the hired shepherds. Encouraged by the love of the Father and Son, these later people will be inclined to feed Jesus' sheep and face the worst any wolf can do to them (John 21:18-19). They will be assured they have been drawn into a love that springs from before time into a future in the enduring company of the shepherd our Lord and God. The sheep must flock together, and listen for his voice.

But in fact, this leadership pattern has not been fully implemented by looking at various phenomena that occur in the lives of believers today. The church leadership has not yet achieved its main goal because it appears that the current pattern of life and culture tends to shift values and morality. Today, the indicator of the success of church leadership is more on the quantity side, namely the number of congregations or the number of church branches or funds in the bank. Meanwhile, in terms of quality (faith or personal), it does not get a balanced focus of attention, thus Christian leadership has shifted to a mere vehicle for contestation with numbers (quantity), and ignores things that are far more important, namely in terms of faith and personal quality (Marisi et al., 2020) The purpose of leadership that the Lord Jesus desires us to have is to lead people to honour God and seek eternal salvation (Harianto et al., 2022). Jesus is our good shepherd, the suffering Messiah who laid down his life for the entire flock. Jesus is the "gate" and "gatekeeper" for the flocks pen, and thus only through Jesus can anybody be made right with God and be able to cross the threshold into the sheepfold.



The theme of Christian leadership and the duties of church pastors and ministers of churches in general, has been widely developed as research material. This is because the theme of leadership has always been a topic of discussion that remains important and interesting (Mawikere, 2018) After all, leaders are an issue of change in this world. One of the issues was compiled by Sumiwi on the characteristics of church pastors according to John 10:1-18 (Sumiwi, 2019). In his article, an exegetical approach was carried out to find the right 'shepherd' criteria. The results of the study showed that a shepherd must have a basic knowledge of God through the Bible. The characters in Scripture possessed responsibility, willingness to sacrifice, know the congregation well, and ability to carry out services appropriately and correctly. Another study was reported by Frederik which discussed the principle of shepherding based on John 10:1-21 (Frederik, 2020). The Word of God is the main foundation in Christian leadership. The result or conclusion of the article is that the principles or concepts of shepherding according to John 10:1-21 include: the call of God, the ministry of care, the Lord Jesus as the center of shepherding, the principle of sacrifice, the existence of equality and the kingdom of God. Purwanto discussed the leadership of the Lord Jesus as a model of leadership in Christianity. The article explores the leadership taught by the Lord Jesus as a pattern for the Christian leadership model, namely 'shepherd' and 'servant' leadership. From the results of the study conducted, it is found that the leadership model in Christianity is based on a close relationship between leaders and followers in brotherhood and friendship. The relationship that is built is in emotional closeness (Purwanto, 2020).

From several previous articles discussing the example of the leadership of the Lord Jesus as a shepherd based on John 10, it is necessary to discuss the deep meaning of the phrases 'good shepherd' and 'hired shepherd' according to the description of verses 11-13 related to the context of contemporary Christian leadership (Melati et al., 2023). Therefore, this study is structured to provide a specific description of the meaning of a good shepherd and its reflection on contemporary Christian leadership patterns. The good shepherd is the leader who actualizes His example in daily life (Resane, 2014).

Method

The research method used in the study is content analysis – a systematic research technique interpreting and analyzing the content of a work - such as a book, article, or newspaper and the drawing valid conclusions from the context used in the text (Krippendorff, 2004). The researcher compiled data with the theme of leadership, whether it was from books, journal articles or proceedings articles about leadership. The discussion is structured with the initial step of describing the nature of the shepherd as Christian leadership, followed by dissecting the meaning of Jesus as the only basis of Christian leadership which emphasizes exemplary and self-sacrificing, humble, and responsible attitudes. From the analysis conducted, the final result draws a conclusion regarding its reflection for today's leadership role (Ming, 2022).

Result and Discussion

The Nature of the Shepherd as a Christian Leader

Jesus called himself the good shepherd. A Christian leader is someone who is chosen or permitted by God to properly carry out his role as a shepherd, not as a hired hand. This is by the words of the Lord Jesus. The meaning of the word shepherd in the KBBI gives the meaning as a keeper or caretaker of livestock, or in the second sense, a shepherd is defined as the guardian of



the safety of the people (Setiawan, 2019). By its meaning as a guardian and custodian, a Christian leader is required to be able to carry out this function with full responsibility. Christian leaders are not hired as those who are irresponsible for the survival and safety of their livestock. A hired hand will flee when danger threatens his flock. This action is intended as an attitude of indifference to the condition of the sheep of the herd. Christian leaders who act as hired hands and not as pastors, act for self-interest, and not for the congregation (Masengwe & Chimhanda, 2020).

When a leader performs these actions, the congregation or followers are placed only as complementary attributes to assert their position as a leader. Whereas leadership indicates a capability or ability to carry out actions and actions that have an impact on followers or the group of people being led (Marbun, 2020). Church leaders are required to carry out their roles and duties properly to form leadership cadres that can leave them to flourish (Katarina & Siswanto, 2018). In summary, it can be stated that in Christianity, a leader needs to carry out a leadership model as a shepherd whose totality of life can move people or followers to the eternal truth (Hunt, 2021).

The leadership model as a shepherd has a focus and orientation on the people, and this model is the pattern of Christian leadership. The principles of leadership carried out by the Lord Jesus become the basis for carrying out Christian leadership. A Christian leader must thus follow a model similar to the example of the Lord Jesus who declared himself to be a shepherd (Purwanto, 2020). Swalm (2010) asserts that Christian leadership provides insights into effective leadership practices that are not only consistent with many emerging contemporary leadership models but are Jesus-centered but also address some of their difficulties (Swalm, 2011). Therefore, it can be said that referring to the nature of shepherds in general, Christian leaders act as guides, directors, educators as well as models who can move followers or believers together towards the main goal of achieving eternal life with God. Christian leadership focuses on all forms of efforts to realize this main goal (Siahaan et al., 2022).

Jesus, the foundation of Christian leadership

The leadership of Jesus Christ reveals the nature and depth of the relationship a leader must have with his followers and those who lead him (Wijaya, 2018b). Apart from being able to influence the life of the congregation, Christian leaders are also required to be role models. If they want to use the Jesus model of leadership, church leaders must first realize that their leadership environment is not limited to the realm of church institutions (Wijaya, 2018b). The translation at John 10:11 is as follows: "I am the good shepherd. As the good shepherd, I lay down my life for my sheep." The definite article on the word or phrase good shepherd, in Greek ποιμήν ὁ, indicates that the statement implies the existence of a good shepherd as a model of Christian leadership (Sumiwi, 2019). If these words are not followed by an article in Greek, then the term shepherd referred to by the Lord Jesus is the broad meaning of shepherd. However, because there is a definite article, the good shepherd figure is only directed to the Lord Jesus. This confirms that the Lord Jesus is the only good shepherd. This implies that the only example for a Christian leader is the Lord Jesus. One of the interesting characteristics of Jesus as a good shepherd is that he is willing to sacrifice and is not selfish but it is love that drives the sacrifice to death (Swalm, 2011).

In every teaching, the Lord Jesus always shows His example as a leader. The Lord Jesus explicitly said repeatedly that we are to follow His example, one of which is in serving others (John 13:14-15). An example like this is a central teaching in the Christian faith because the Lord Jesus himself directly gave an example to humans how to live a life pleasing to the Father (Phillipians 2:6-7) (Harianto et al., 2023).



In his letters, the Apostle Paul talks a lot about examples. The Apostle Paul directs the church primarily through its leaders to set an example of life just as he also imitated the Lord Jesus (Philippians 3:17-21). Paul clearly understands that his responsibility is not to build new churches or congregations, and not to attract people to become Christians, but to set the right example for the congregation through his life and ministry. This is a must for a leader (Kosta & Djadi, 2011) just as the Lord Jesus was willing to lay down his life for His sheep. Being such a big responsibility of a shepherd, it encourages him to risk his life for the safety of his sheep (Sumiwi, 2019). The existence of church pastors or community leaders should serve as role models and be an example for believers to follow in life. A shepherd does not control the sheep by force but leads by walking ahead. Congregations or believers need leaders to lead to right and good things based on the truth of God's word (Nicolaidis, 2021).

In Christianity, leadership requires an example so that the faith of the congregation can grow well. This is because only leaders who have exemplary leadership skills will bring influence to those they lead. The teachings of a leader and example are closely related and cannot be separated. Power will come when the right example and teachings are combined because without an example a leader will not affect those he leads (Titus 2:7). Leadership is not an authority that is free to give orders but rather the ability to give real love through life. Christian leaders must first love sincerely so that a culture is formed in life (Samarena & Siahaan, 2019). The sacrifice of the Lord Jesus clearly shows the love and sacrifice of a real leader for the congregation. The Lord Jesus is not a shepherd who only “seeks and saves the lost” (Luke 19:10), or “gives up his life for His sheep” (John 10:11), but also “always shares” (Matthew 28:20). God, the true leader gives us the most perfect model of Christian leadership. It should be the standard or archetype for all Christian leaders (Tarigan et al., 2021).

Christian leaders are self-sacrificing for others and Humble

In general, the task of a shepherd is very weighty especially when it comes to dealing with the threat of wild animals. Sometimes a shepherd must save his flock from the attack of a wolf, bear, or lion. In this case, the Lord Jesus said that He is the most perfect shepherd who fully has the responsibility for the salvation of the sheep by His willingness to die for the sheep being shepherded (Sumiwi, 2019). Willingness to sacrifice will appear when the shepherd focuses on the interests of his sheep. Sacrifice can occur in a leader who leads with a serving heart because then there is no selfish attitude or desire. Love is the foundation of the Shepherd's leadership and can be considered the foundation of the relationship between the Shepherd leader and his followers (Anselmus Dami, 2021). Like the Lord Jesus who practices agape love or love that gives without demanding in return, willingly sacrifices to put the interests of others first. Jesus Christ as a shepherd sets a real example by applying that love in His ministry and life (Thomassoyan et al., n.d.) and above all through his sacrifice at Golgotha for the redemption of fallen humanity through the sins of Adam and Eve in Genesis.

A humble attitude in leading will give birth to a strong personality, far from arrogance and personal ambition. In order to achieve success in leadership, an attitude of humility is needed from a leader. This can be seen from the attitude that is always willing to accept criticism and suggestions from the people being led (Katarina & Siswanto, 2018). In Matthew 20:26:27 it is emphasized by the Lord Jesus that true leadership does not give birth to power and pride, but becomes the smallest through an attitude of sincere service. Humility characterizes Christian leadership as exemplified by the Lord Jesus, His disciples, and apostles. Leadership is not based on power, violence, and authoritarianism but is humble, gentle, God-fearing, truth-bearing, compassionate, conciliatory,



and ready to suffer (Condro, 2019). The pastoral leadership model is consistent with servant leadership, and actually offers an operational theory that demonstrates how servanthood can be effectively applied in the way the Bible prescribes.(Anselmus Dami, 2021). Humility must be manifested in every leadership and service. Being a servant of God is required to live fully only for Him (Siahaan, 2018).

Human history proves that pride was the beginning of the fall and sin. Realizing this, the Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 5:5-6 warned leaders to stay away from pride because God's punishment applies to pride. God delights in humility. Humble leaders will be able to sincerely volunteer themselves to achieve the goal of Christian leadership, which is to bring followers or congregations to eternal life in heaven.

Responsible Christian Leadership

Leadership always contains obligations and responsibilities to be implemented. The responsibility of a shepherd is to have caring, courage, and a guiding spirit (Resane, 2014). In John 10:11-12 it is stated that "a hired man who is not a shepherd, considers the sheep not his own so that when he sees a threat from a wild beast coming he will run away and leave the sheep". This verse gives a comparison between the good shepherd and the hired shepherd, the hired shepherd is the one who shepherds and cares for the sheep on the basis of wages. A hired shepherd is not the owner of the flock, so the care for the flock is not like the concern for the shepherd who owns the flock. This makes a hired man possibly irresponsible for his duties and prefers to save himself rather than having to carry out efforts to save sheep from the threat of wild animals. Christian leaders who tend to be selfish and oriented towards wages, will be held accountable (Bani et al., 2022), just like a flock of sheep without a shepherd who will be scattered hoarsely and die by the attack of wild beasts. This leadership concept contains an element of responsibility that must be expressed in service.

In John 10:13 it is stated: "for he is a hired hand and does not care about the sheep". This verse is an explanation of the previous verse. In this verse, the reason a hired hand does not have the courage to give his life for the salvation of the flock is that he is not the owner of the sheep. It is stated in this verse that the mind of a hired hand is limited by the wages of herding sheep. A hired hand does not care about the safety, safety, and welfare of the sheep (Sumiwi, 2019). In the context of Christianity, the personal credibility of a church leader or a qualified pastor should be able to manage the church institution he leads in line with the truth of God's word (Rajagukguk, 2019).

Reflection on Pastoral Leadership for Today's Leadership

John 10:11-13 is a verse that discusses the leadership model that the Lord Jesus introduced and exemplified, namely the model of Christian leaders as shepherds. Specifically, verses 11 to 13 which are the focus of this research talk about the characteristics of a good shepherd and the difference between them and a hired shepherd. In essence, according to the Lord Jesus, there are only two types of shepherds, namely good and bad shepherds or those called hired shepherds. The real difference between the two lies in the care for the sheep that are shepherded. The good shepherd focuses on the sheep so this encourages the emergence of a strong concern for all the needs of the sheep. The concern is born from the right focus. In accordance with the explanation quoted from the Cambridge Dictionary, focus means "the main or central point of something". Focus is the main point or center of attention. Focus is synonymous with



concentration. This implies that there is no other point of attention other than that which exists as a focus. Concentrating completely on one point is vital.

In the context of pastoral leadership, focus on the sheep means that the only central point of concern is on the sheep. A good Christian leader or church pastor places his focus only on the interests and needs of the congregation. Or with another explanation that the church is the only goal of ministry. The needs of the congregation are the leader's sole interest, and when that happens, the concern will arise naturally as a result of the continued focus on the interests and needs of the congregation. The Lord Jesus is the good shepherd, the focus of His life is on human interests and needs. He cared about the threat of eternal destruction for sin so that He gave His life so that humans could have penance and could experience eternal life with Him. In carrying out His mission, during his ministry in the world, the Lord Jesus did not care about His own interests, only the interests of His people became the focus of his attention.

Verses 12-13 talk about hired shepherds who, when they see an attack or threat coming, leave their sheep. This depiction refers to a foolish shepherd (Zechariah 11:17) who has bad and irresponsible behaviour. The essence of this bad behaviour is a selfish, hired shepherd's focus on his own self-centred life (Henry, 2022). In today's Christian leadership, self-interest refers to the pleasures, wealth, and all the amenities that exist in the world. The hired shepherd loves or focuses more on wages than the work of shepherding. The wages in this case are worldly things. Christian leaders who act like hired shepherds focus more on self, family, and group interests. These leaders place the needs and interests of the congregation as complementary issues and are not the most important thing in a ministry. The leaders who act as hired shepherds can be termed as natural people (Deuteronomy 24:15; 1 Samuel 2:29; Isaiah 56:11; Micah 3:5, 11). The characteristics of worldly humans are still liking worldly pleasures or being ruled by carnal desires such as following lifestyle trends, having a world-standard mindset, having worldly visions, and even living in sin (Arifianto, 2020).

Christian leaders who act like hired shepherds do not value the soul of the congregation. The congregation becomes an object so that the satisfaction of being the master over them is fulfilled. This is the contradiction of a good shepherd who should be a helper and caretaker of the church. Although the church is wholly owned by God, the pastor or church leader is obliged to love and regard the congregation as his own which must be the main focus of his attention (Henry, 2022). Leaders who don't give priority to the needs of the congregation are not loyal leaders. This is illustrated by the action of the shepherd running away when danger threatens the sheep. Christian leaders who behave as hired shepherds do not think about the consequences of their actions. Sheep scattered means perishing souls enter into eternal horror. It is very clear that the hallmark of the leadership of the Lord Jesus is to influence and transfer the vision and mission to His followers. The leadership of Jesus has a service basis so that nothing at all done has a personal advantage focus (Katarina & Siswanto, 2018).

The above depiction concretely occurs in many churches today which are facing serious challenges as their leaders often neglect the duties of leadership and display behaviours that are far from the truth (Ngesthi et al., 2022). Examples of situations that occur are church leaders or pastors who live in luxury (Selan, 2020), those who behave not according to the truth of God's word (Selan, 2020), those pastors involved in conflicts (Minggu, 2012; Taufik, 2021) and are too focused on forming various church programmes that are not meeting the needs of their congregations (Laia, 2019). Often pastors are involved in moral violations (Cipta, 2021) and various other conditions. Leaders should do their job according to God's truth so that it will form



the right motivation and desire as God's will (Hertanto et al., 2021). The responsibility of church leaders should be as them being the primary means used by God to keep His congregation growing in the direction and doing the right work in serving communities and society (Djadi & Thomassoyan, 2011).

These facts confirm that Christian leaders have not yet performed their duties as good shepherds. It takes hard efforts from all pastors and church leaders to evaluate themselves and carry out transformations to be able to walk in the truth so that they can become good shepherds. Some important steps that can be taken are to let go of egos and personal interests, direct the focus of the ministry to the interests of the congregation and seek all forms of church activities to meet the needs of the congregation. In summary, it can be stated that it is necessary to change the direction of the ministry's focus from personal interests to the interests of the congregation in general and beyond. This is because Christian leadership is an agent of change (Suhadi & Arifianto, 2020). This fulfills the example of the Lord Jesus as the only 'good shepherd' who gave up the totality of His life for the salvation of the congregation by bringing changes to the best.

Conclusion

John 10:11-13 presents the example of the leadership of the Lord Jesus as a good shepherd. The verse focuses on the characteristics of a good shepherd and the difference between a good one and a hired shepherd. It was found that a good shepherd is a shepherd who focuses on the interests of the sheep, while a hired shepherd only tends to focus on the wages of his work. This means that true Christian leaders are leaders who focus on the interests of the congregation and vice versa, disabled leaders only focus on worldly material things. "Essentially, all baptised believers are part of the chosen race and the royal priesthood, which form the holy nation of God" (Nicolaidis, 2010). There needs to be a transformation for today's church leaders and pastors so that they can become good shepherds according to the Lord Jesus example. Some important steps that can be taken are to let go of ego and personal interests, directing the focus of the ministry to the interests of the congregation and seek all forms of church activities to fulfill the needs of the salvation of the souls of the congregation. The core duty of the shepherd is to provide nourishment for his flock (Ezekiel 34:2). In church life, it is the pastor or priest who must consider that his leadership is most strongly demonstrated through his teaching and preaching ministry. A truly good shepherd humbly and gently leads his flock and does not use power to forcefully control his flock. He must care for his congregation and know the members by name, their strong points and weaknesses. He is there to lead the way and set an example as he listen to them, encourages, and motivates them by being a positive spiritual role model.

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