

Comparison of pastoral care models



Shepherd as a Pastoral Care Model

In this essay I will consider what is meant by “ Pastoral Care”. Although Campbell (1986) put forward three pastoral care models: Shepherd, Wounded Healer and Wise Fool, in this essay I will be looking at The Shepherd, examining where this model may or may not be helpful: women; sheep; and non collaborative, moving on to looking at the Wounded Healer as an alternative before reaching my final conclusion about both models.

Pastoral care

Everyone should assume that church cares. Pastoral care is how this is demonstrated offering:

Healing, Guiding, Sustaining, Reconciling, Nurturing, Liberating and Empowering(Lartey, 2003). Campbell (1985, p. 1) describes pastoral care as a means to share love between people and people and God. We are told to love our neighbours as ourselves (Matthew 22: 39).

Pattinson (1988, p. 13) says ‘ *Pastoral Care is that activity, undertaken especially by representative Christian persons, directed towards the elimination and relief of sin and sorrow and the presentation of all people perfect in Christ to God* ’. I prefer this definition as it is more rounded and focuses on real-life problems and on awareness of God and reminds me of Matthew 25: 34-40 where Jesus says what we do to help others we do for Him.

The Shepherd

The shepherd is probably the most widely recognised Biblical model. Pastor is Greek for shepherd (Biblehub. com. 2018)

The metaphor of the shepherd and his sheep can be poignant: “ *The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing .*” (Psalm 23: 1). “... *we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.*” (Psalm95: 7)

“...*and I lay down my life for the sheep*” (John10: 15)

The metaphor demonstrates our relationship with God through our faith in Jesus with strong imagery on leading, feeding and protecting the people of that time and place could relate to. The shepherd usually lived with the sheep, leading, feeding and protecting them and would have an incredible knowledge of their flock.

An early Old Testament reference to a shepherd refers to God himself. Jacob (also a shepherd) says “...*God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day.*” (Genesis 48: 15)

David referred to God as his shepherd. In Psalm 23 the shepherd provides everything for the sheep including protection and safety using his rod and staff. The sheep were safe even when “ walking through the valley of the shadow of death” a frightening place. David is almost bragging about his shepherd but also admitting that he needs one.

Keller (1970, p. 21) explains “ *It is no accident that God has chosen to call us sheep. The behaviour of sheep and human beings is similar in many ways ... our mass mind (or mob instincts); our fears and timidity, our stubbornness*

and stupidity, our perverse habits, and all parallels are of profound importance .”

God placed leaders (shepherds) to take care of his people. Sheep are helpless without the shepherd. He loves them and gives them everything they need and will even look for the ones who are lost (Ezekiel34: 11-16) but there are corrupt shepherds. They were warned:

“.....” This is what the Sovereign Lord says: woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? (Ezekiel34: 2)

The leaders were more interested in finding ways to benefit from the flock rather than caring for them (Ezekiel 34: 3). Their shepherding skills were called into question. They had not been feeding, leading and protecting the people (sheep). An example of how not to do pastoral care.

Shepherds were held in high esteem during Old Testament times but were often seen as being of little consequence in New Testament times. However Christ himself said he was the good shepherd. As a shepherd Jesus does not force his “ flock” to follow him but relies on his relationship with them. Just as sheep recognise their shepherd`s voice and follow him those who follow Jesus hear his voice and follow (John 10: 4). Jesus cared for His flock (Matthew 9: 36) and says he is the gate for them (John 10: 7) . Biblical shepherds made pens for their sheep using branches and stones. The entrance was left open. The shepherd would check each sheep entering, touching it and saying its name. Once all the sheep were in the pen the shepherd would lie across the opening ensuring that the sheep stayed safely

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in the enclosure and preventing wild animals from attacking the sheep (Bible-history. com, 2019).

Shepherding in that time could be dangerous but Morris (1971, p. 509) says that losing their life

“ must have been a fairly rare occurrence among Palestinian shepherds.”

Jesus, however, deliberately laid down his life for his sheep (John 10: 11).

Jesus` love for his sheep continues after he sacrificed his life for them. After he rose from the dead He told Peter “....“ Feed my lambs”; “ Take care of my sheep”; and “ Feed my sheep” (John 21: 15-17)

I believe Jesus wanted Peter to show his love for Him by acting as a shepherd to God`s sheep (people) “ feed” refers to teaching, and “ lambs” refers to those who are new (young) to the Christian faith.

Jesus sent the apostles into the world to be like him (John 17: 18). Peter says Jesus is the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5: 4), this is how leaders should be, like Jesus. He passed this model on to the “ church” leadership. Paul tells the church leaders in Ephesus to: *“ Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.”* (Acts 20: 28). This could be suggesting that the leaders should be pastoral carers.

In my opinion the shepherding model highlights qualities needed when caring for others as individuals or community with each person being valued. Shepherds serve as an example of humility, attracting their flocks by having loving, authentic relationships with them. They feed, protect and are known by the flock and trusted. They rejoice and grieve with them.

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In this model the problem is looked at in context and a prescribed method used to reach resolution using logic. The shepherd generally is objective without paying attention to emotions. This is useful when a person is open to suggestions and direction but sometimes a person just wants to be listened to. The shepherd wants to be the one to fix problems the danger though, is that the shepherd may feel the burden of responsibility and be hard on themselves, burning out and that others may become dependent on them. This model leads into the servant model – serving God through service to your neighbours. Shepherds are leaders with an attitude of serving. This attitude of servanthood is evident in the ordination services.

Is this shepherd model always useful though?

Women

The shepherd image is usually androcentric, focusing on men excluding women. Grant (1983, p. 58) believes the patriarchal society has become “obsessed with Jesus maleness” and therefore models Jesus` gender and not His nature. There is only one woman, Rachel (Genesis 29: 9) who is actually referred to as a shepherdess in scripture. However there were many women such as Zipporah (Exodus 2) who looked after sheep. Many women were doing the same job as men but their role was negated by only the men being called shepherds. This implies that “caring” is by men only. Oden (1983, p. 52) says “modern stereotypes that portray shepherds always as male fail to grasp the fact that in primitive pastoral societies, women as often as men were active in caring for valued animals”.

This negative type of imagery in the Bible and Church may make it harder for some women to serve in womanhood and can hold back their spiritual development.

Sheep

Every shepherd has sheep. Sheep are often thought of as being “stupid”. BBC News(2005) reported a story where 400+ sheep died by falling 15m to their death by following one sheep. Around 1000 more sheep followed but their fall was cushioned by the dead sheep. Matthew 9: 36 says that when Jesus saw the crowds He “had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” Both these stories seem to demonstrate that the sheep need a shepherd, a leader, and in scripture the dynamic between shepherd and sheep appears to be one way with the shepherd leading and the sheep following. Deeks (1987, p. 252) puts forward the criticism that sheep is a poor metaphor for people, depicting them as dumb and stupid. Campbell (1986, p. 23) agrees “The major problem with the imagery of shepherding is that it seems to encourage an alien and demeaning form of paternalism: – the sheep are errant, feckless, easily led astray; the shepherd is dedicated, powerful and always knows best.”

Most Christians would not like to be thought of as sheep (Melinsky 1992). However this image of sheep is not a true portrayal of sheep. They may be wilful but not stupid. Sheep need food and shelter, they need safety as do people. Jesus called us sheep. But not just sheep. He calls us “His” sheep. This is comforting and encouraging. He will never be fed up with us or ignore

us (Isaiah 40: 28) and we are told “ *I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep*” (John 10: 14-15); which He did.

Non Collaborative Leadership

The image as people as sheep infers they need a shepherd/leader to lead them. This can cause dependency which then may lead to an “ autocratic leadership” style(Deeks, 1987). This leadership style involves total authoritarian control. There are benefits to this depending on the situation e. g. in stressful situations a decision can be made quickly; there is a clear chain of command and oversight; useful when strong, directive leadership is needed. However the drawbacks are that: group input is discouraged; morale can be lowered and resentment may occur; any expertise from subordinates may be ignored (Cherry, 2019). Therefore the shepherd model could be seen as one of subordination and is again ambiguous in its image of inclusivity.

In today’s context the shepherd model does not demonstrate collaborative ministry. I believe that collaborative ministry is important. As a response to God`s call to “ all” it is important that “ all” are able to contribute as God`s disciples. This is an essential component of Christian formation. Non collaborative ministry might not be appropriate in large churches.

Shepherding 300+ sheep can be difficult. Some clergy have told me they would like to do more Pastoral Care but find it difficult even in small congregations as some feel they have not been visited if it is not by the vicar.

Pastorally the shepherding model can seem to infer the person in need of care is not allowed a voice and the shepherd has the solution which he hands over “ on a plate”. Today pastoral care is often about helping a person to work through their issues.

Wounded Healer

The wounded Healer is based on the image of Christ suffering. The wounded healer:

“...restores the fractured relationships between God, humanity, and the whole universe. . . . Jesus’ wounds, in life and death, are the expressions of his openness to our suffering. He suffered because of his love: his sufferings are the stigmata of his care for us and for the whole world estranged from God.”(Campbell, 1986, p. 38)

He continued “ *Such wounded love has a healing power because it is en-fleshed love, entering into our human weakness, feeling our pain, standing beside us in our dereliction .*”

In other words Jesus` suffering encourages healing because the suffering occurred due to His love for us.

Jung used the wounded healer as a metaphor describing part of a therapist – patient relationship. He believed wounded healers developed insight and resilience from their experiences, enabling transformative interventions to occur with clients (Newcomb et al., 2015).

The wounded healer uses their pain/suffering to comfort and encourage others. They are sharing Jesus`s suffering and His comfort with others (2 Corinthians 1: 4).

In this way the wounds of those offering pastoral care act as a means of healing. Frank (2013, p. xii) writes “ The ill, and all those who suffer, can also be healers. Their injuries become the source of the potency of their stories. Through their stories, the ill create empathic bonds between themselves and their listeners”.

Everyone`s pain is different but that does not mean sharing of pain is impossible, we can on some level know and empathise Unlike the shepherd, who uses all their resources to ease suffering, the wounded healer model works not by distancing or “ working through” pain but by experiencing it fully: “ A minister is not a doctor whose primary task is to take away pain. Rather he deepens the pain to a level where it can be shared.”(Nouwen, 1972, p. 92). The aim is to share another`s pain without adding to it.

Whereas shepherds look at the context of a problem this not so important to the wounded healer. They are concerned with how a person is experiencing a problem (emotions) rather than what caused it, acknowledging the subjective (creative part of our minds which informs intelligence) and subconscious (not fully aware but influences actions and feelings.) (Grayson, 1997, p. 41).

To offer effective pastoral care it is important to remember and to remind others that life is not meant to be painless (even Jesus suffered) and avoiding pain can be detrimental as it is through experiencing pain we also

experience the love of God and His peace. Being a spiritual friend can be a means to give a nurturing, healing setting where we can model health after woundedness. Unlike the Shepherd model this model is not about techniques and methods but is a ministry of presence with wounded healers suppressing moral judgements and not expressing their own personal belief.

This ministry of presence is one that Jesus extends to us “.... And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28: 20)

This method is useful in self help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous and other substance abuse groups (Jackson, 2001).

A problem with this method is that the healer can become consumed with their own issues, especially if their own wounds are not healed “ open wounds stink and do not heal”(Nouwen, 1972, p. 88). The phrase “ I know what you mean.” may be used which leads to a basic level of sharing.

Wounded Healers are compassionate but often need to be compassionate with their own behaviours too and may find setting boundaries difficult, particularly if they are not fully healed themselves. There is a danger of becoming enabling, encouraging the negative behaviour rather than independent growth.

Conclusion

Mark 2: 1-12 and Mark 5: 25-32 provide examples of Jesus working in partnership (collaborative) with the person in need, not imposing miracles on sheep (one who is a woman) with no understanding of their needs.

Campbell`s (1986) Wounded Healer may be a better fit for this example as

Wounded Healers can be any gender and people are not seen as sheep.

Wounded Healer is also more collaborative with the person and healer working together to solve the problem.

However the use of any model (including those omitted in this essay) should be used with sensitivity. Christian Pastoral care is about a relationship between carer, the person and God.

I feel the Trinity (a relationship between the three persons) represents to us that we are also in a relationship, with a community, with dependency on one another. As a community we all have different gifts, skills and personalities. These differences will affect our pastoral care styles and needs.

Therefore in my opinion both models have valuable insights into pastoral care. The first thought should be what is needed in this instance, clarity, empathy or a new perspective? This may effect the style of pastoral care most suitable. The pastoral care giver may not be able to “ fix” everything. Sometimes it is about “ care” not “ cure”, being there for others when needed. It might be necessary to refer a person to others who can help, e. g. AA, CAP , but prayer can nearly always be offered. I feel the essential aspect of pastoral care is that we are as Christ like as possible. Jesus referred to Himself as a shepherd but He was much more than this. He lived alongside and loved others but also had good judgement, integrity, truth and faith and was compassionate, patient, humble, forgiving and unselfish. He was also prayerful. Prayer can rejuvenate pastoral care and is at the centre of pastoral ministry.

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