

# Teachers as Shepherds in Christian Schools: Exploration of the Shepherd Metaphor in the Perspective of the Christian Faith

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**Abstract.** One of the teacher's roles in a Christian school is the role of a shepherd. The shepherd metaphor itself is unique where the shepherd teacher's role could not be found in general in the education's world. The COVID-19 pandemic itself has become a time for Christian schools to reflect on the role of a teacher in shepherding their students. The shepherd's metaphor, the teacher's role as a shepherd and the pastoral duties of the teachers explore in the discussion from the perspective of the Christian faith. An example of the shepherding knowledge of the 21st-century learning approach is Project-Based Learning. The exploration results provide an essential description of the leading role of a Christian teacher in the context of a Christian school and become a reflection that confirms the calling of a Christian teacher, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Keywords:** shepherd metaphor; the role of the teacher; shepherd teacher; shepherding aspects; spirituality; knowledge; Christian faith perspective; project-based learning

## 1 Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has made some changes in various aspects, including in the world of education. The presence of the Independent Learning concept issued by the Minister of Education and Culture responded by Christian schools as a form of reflection to see their role as a Christian school. An activity initiated by the SAAT Theological College in May 2020 at the National Conference (Rembuknas), attended by church and school leaders and leaders of Christian institutions throughout Indonesia, has produced good thoughts to sharpen the vocation of every church and ministry institution. Based on the results of a national survey from the Bilangan Research Center (Teng & Margaret, 2020). Christian schools themselves reflect on their vocation and role in realizing education according to the principles of the Christian faith.

One of the teacher's roles applied in Christian schools is that of a teacher as a shepherd. It is a unique role that cannot be found in the world of education in general. The teacher as a shepherd is born from a description or metaphor from a Christian perspective. The metaphor of a shepherd is an exciting thing to explore, considering that the word shepherd is usually attached to a servant of God (preacher) in a church (N. Gunter, 2016) but apparently, Christian schools also use this metaphor in describing the role of a teacher.

Since the pandemic broke out, the title of the shepherd to teachers in Christian schools has been determined. The task of these teachers is to shepherd the students. Based on the above

context, this paper will discuss three series—first, the exploration of the shepherd metaphor from the perspective of the Christian faith. Second, the teacher's role as a shepherd is revealed in the context of a Christian school. Third, the shepherding task of a shepherd teacher in a Christian school. After many explorations of this metaphor, the teacher confirmed being a pastor in a Christian school.

## 2 Research Methods

This study uses a type of qualitative research that emphasizes content or document analysis. The content analysis focuses on analyzing and interpreting data in textbooks, documents, reports and other documents (Morphology, n.d.) The document analysis in this study includes the vision and mission documents of Christian schools, values in Christian schools, documents on the principles of belief or confession of faith in Christian schools, core curriculum documents of Christian schools, etc. Based on the above documents, the researcher conducted an analysis related to the role of the pastoral teacher in the context of a Christian school.

## 3 Results and Discussion

### *Shepherd Metaphor*

The Shepherd metaphor is a conventional metaphor attached to leaders. The embedding of shepherds can be seen from the historical heritage of the Middle East, where ancient people at that time pinned the image of the shepherd to the good leaders of gods (Egypt), kings (Sumerian), community leaders (Assyria and Babylon) (Widodo, 2017). The leader image of the Shepherd metaphor refers to the leader protecting and shepherding his flock (Nissim, 2020).

The Shepherd's description in Christian thought refers to the Old Testament and the New Testament written in the Bible. The shepherd metaphor starts with Genesis, where Habel is a shepherd, and the word shepherd himself is acknowledged about 500 times in the OT and NT (Kelebogile T Resane, 2020). Great OT leaders such as Moses and David are described as shepherds and prophets and God's elect. The shepherd metaphor is an apt description in describing the leadership of believers in the community of God's people (N. H. Gunter, 2018).

The Shepherd in the OT is expressed in God the shepherd who shepherds His people, namely Israel (Is 40:11) and in Psalm 23 gives a shepherd metaphor with poetry that declares God Himself as the shepherd (K. Thomas Resane, 2014). God's position as a Shepherd for His people declares God's leadership over the shepherds (humans), namely the person of God Himself as the Great Shepherd for the people He leads.

The metaphor of the shepherd in the New Testament describes the person of the Lord Jesus himself as the Shepherd. The natural action of the Lord Jesus as a Shepherd is to shepherding His people by carrying out various services ranging from seeking the lost, and He tells the story in the metaphor of the lost sheep (Luk 15:3-7; Mat 18:12-14). The metaphor of a shepherd looking for a lost sheep exhibits the responsibility of a shepherd towards his flock. The effort described searching to find the lost sheep.

Another metaphor of the shepherd is described in the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep. The shepherd-sheep relationship in this metaphor is a close relationship where the sheep recognize shepherd's voice and fully trust the shepherd (Hermawati et al., 2021). The Lord Jesus gave a shepherding voice in teaching, exhortation, warning or rebuke His followers and the crowds who followed Him in droves.

### *Teacher's Role as Shepherd*

The teacher's role as a shepherd cannot separate from his leadership in the classroom entrusted to him to be shepherded. The Bible is the primary reference of the teacher's role as a shepherd where this shepherding task is an image or metaphor of God as a shepherd who keeps His people attached to roles such as servants of God, a teacher and other leaders (Ganzevoort et al., 2014).

The shepherd teacher carries out the pastoral role to respond to God's call for himself as a Christian educator. This shepherding task is clearly stated in 1 Peter 5:2, " Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve." The understanding of shepherd here means a willingness to serve wholeheartedly (Rupa', 2016). A shepherd teacher accepts the call to shepherd voluntarily and without coercion and is willing to serve as a shepherd teacher in the world of education.

### *Teacher-Shepherd: Shepherding*

Shepherding carried out by a teacher-shepherd includes two things which are shepherding the hearts or spirituality of students and shepherding students' knowledge. These two mandates are closely related to the vocation of Christian schools in carrying out the cultural mandate (Gen 1:28) and the gospel mandate (Mat 28:19-20). The task of shepherding human's hearts is related to the great commission, which tells of the appearance of the Lord Jesus after His resurrection to His disciples on the Mount of Galilee (Sim, 2014). The disciples received a mandate from the Lord Jesus to make disciples, to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God to the whole world (Ijeudo et al., 2020). This mandate is to make disciples and preach the gospel for Christian schools and carry out God's mission.

The second pastoral task is to shepherd knowledge that is closely related to cultural mandates. Genesis chapters 1 and 2 tell of God's mission to the world, which involves humans participating (Kgatla & Kamukwamba, 2019). God created the world and everything so beautiful, pleasing, harmonious, and natural laws and moral laws that He has set. The sustainability of God's world requires human participation to maintain, cultivate, organize following the goals and purposes that God has set. The big goal of this mission is to build a God-centered environment where Adam is asked to carry out his mandate by managing God's world so that an environment based on God-centered culture is built (Kgatla & Kamukwamba, 2019). God's mission in Genesis 1:28 is a mission for all humans to manage God's created world responsibly and ensure the sustainability of all creation both on land, sea and air and throughout the universe.

### *Shepherding Disciples' Hearts*

Spirituality is an essential aspect of the pastoral aspect that occurs in Christian schools. The shepherd teacher has a role in shepherding the spirituality of the students. Spirituality itself is related to the human heart, wherefrom the heart radiates one's life (Prov 4:23). The human heart needs to be guided and directed so that the visible behavior of the disciple is in harmony with Christian principles. Shepherd teachers provide training in good habits in schools, resulting in incorrect behaviors and ultimately becoming a lifestyle and leading to the formation of the character of a disciple of Christ.

Pastoring spiritually for students can be done by building a community for students to learn about God's work and know the person of Christ and ultimately experience new birth by acknowledging and believing in Christ the Savior. The formed community teaches students to have fellowship both in small and large groups, where the shepherd teacher takes the role of a

shepherd who guides the students' spirituality entrusted to him. This growing community is where the shepherd teacher builds relationships and gets to know each student he shepherds well.

*Shepherding Disciples' Knowledge*

Christian schools have a calling to realize God's mission into the world so that the primary goal of Christian schools is to achieve the goals that God gave. One aspect of Christian school pastoral is rationality, where Christian schools teach various scientific disciplines. Each subject of the field of study provides knowledge according to the uniqueness of each science. Shepherding knowledge or knowledge is a challenge for a teacher in a Christian school, specifically in implementing the integration of Christian faith in learning (Peter & Nyongesa, 2019).

A shepherd teacher will continue to shepherd the knowledge of his students, meaning a shepherd teacher teaches science to students in the principles of the Christian faith. The knowledge taught has an estuary for the glory of God's name, but the implementation of shepherding student knowledge becomes challenging to realize when the first humans, namely Adam and Eve, fell into sin (Genesis 3). When man's fall into sin made man deviate from the commands or regulations that God has set for all creation. The deviations made by sinful humans cause damage to nature and all creatures and are described by the letter of Romans, which is that all creatures are in a state of suffering and waiting for recovery. The Apostle Paul in Romans 8:22 says, "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time." This depiction shows that sinful human behavior has a significant impact on the entire order of God's creation that requires restoration from all humankind. The restoration of nature and all creatures in it is the responsibility of believers, including Christian schools.

A shepherd teacher can carry out efforts to shepherd knowledge by applying learning based on the principles of the Christian faith. The Christian worldview, which is based on the story of creation, fall and redemption, is the ground motive in building the perspective of Christian faith in learning at school. The formation of a Christian worldview can use three fundamental questions from the grand story of creation, fall and redemption (Pearcey, n.d.). Questions related to creation include questions about the origin and purpose of creation. The fall asks about how the sinful nature of human beings deflects the direction God has set for every aspect of creation. The climax of the question lies in the concept of redemption, namely how Christ's redemptive work brings back every aspect of creation into God's original design and purpose.

**Table 1. Fundamental Questions of Creation, Fall, Redemption**

Creation	Fall	Redemption
Where did everything come from?	How is that aspect affected by sin?	How should I, as a believer, straighten this understanding?
What purpose did God set in the creation?	Please show me where the problem lies!	What should a child of God think when he sees this?
Is there beauty in creation?	Where is the problem?	What efforts do I make to restore it according to the truth of God's word?
Is there any consistency in it?	How is my understanding affected by sin?	What attitudes should I take to see this phenomenon?

Is there a natural law that governs it?	How is it misused as a result of sinful humans?	Is there a principle of justice that I should strive for in this case?
Are there moral norms or laws that God has established for His creation?	What kind of damage does it have?	Is there a principle of truth that I should convey in that case?
What kind of norms are there?		
Does God still care for his creation until now?	What factors caused this to happen?	What motivation do I have for doing that?

The three fundamental questions of creation, fall, and redemption aim to shepherd students in seeing the surrounding reality. Pearcey (n.d.) says, *"The grid of Creation, Fall, Redemption is not only helpful in diagnosing theological traditions, as we saw in earlier chapters. It also provides the scaffolding for constructing a Christian perspective on any topic, along with a grid for analyzing competing worldviews."* These three basic questions will bring into the process of shepherding knowledge carried out by Christian schools and, in this case, by a shepherd teacher to the students he teaches.

#### *Shepherding Knowledge in Project-Based Learning*

The shepherd teacher gave this project to students to research the literature in a written report. Project topics can be related to environmental pollution. Examples given are pollution or air pollution in Jakarta. Based on news from Kompas on June 16, 2020, Jakarta was once the second-largest city contributor to air pollution in the world after New Delhi, India, by reaching 131 US AQI based on AirVisualAQI.com data. The following is an example of shepherding student knowledge in a Christian faith perspective through Project-Based Learning.

**Table 2.** Project-Based Learning Types of Research Projects (Research Projects)

Project Topic	Air Pollution in Jakarta
Working time	Two months
Integrated Field of Study	Science and social studies
Project Workflow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research on Air Pollution issues in DKI Jakarta by looking at journals or literature</li> <li>• Conducting interviews with the local government/Regional Environmental Management Agency</li> <li>• Examine the sources of air pollution in Jakarta (transportation, industry, domestic)</li> <li>• Simulating air pollution measurements together with local government agencies</li> </ul>
Three Fundamental Questions	<p><i>Creation:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was God's original plan for the environment in which humans live?</li> <li>• Are there natural laws that God has ordained in it?</li> <li>• What is the purpose of God creating air for humans?</li> </ul> <p><i>Fall:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What causes air pollution in Jakarta?</li> <li>• Where is the problem?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is involved in it?</li> <li>• Mention the impact!</li> </ul> <p><i>Redemption:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did the children of God respond to the problem of air pollution in Jakarta?</li> <li>• What efforts can be made to reduce air pollution in Jakarta?</li> </ul>
Project Results	Project Results Report on Air Pollution Research in Jakarta Research is presented in class or the form of seminars

The values built by a shepherd teacher in shepherding knowledge through the Project-Based Learning approach above are to develop students' awareness of the crucial issues of the environment in which they live. This awareness fosters meaningful learning for students in exploring the world around them and being responsible for preserving the beautiful world God created and designed at the time of creation.

#### 4 Conclusion

Based on the explanation above, concluding three things. First, the shepherd metaphor is unique in describing the leadership role of a shepherd towards the flock he shepherds. The shepherd metaphor refers to God Himself as the Great Shepherd, the supreme leader of all shepherds in the world. Second, the teacher's role as a shepherd is also a unique role where the shepherd teacher is entrusted with leading a group of students in his class. The pastoral task is carried out with full awareness with an attitude of devotion to God's work in the world of education. Third, shepherding the shepherd teacher includes two tasks, shepherding the hearts and knowledge of students carried out in the perspective of Christian faith based on the story of the Bible with a big story that rests on creation, the fall and redemption. The story of creation, fall and redemption end with a story of fulfilment (consummation), which is applied in the Project-Based Learning model.

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