

# Jesus as a Good Shepherd in John 10:11: Spiritual Leadership in Indonesian Context

Paulus Eppang<sup>1</sup>, Inge Nuraini<sup>2</sup>, Hartanto<sup>3</sup>

STT Sangkakala Jakarta<sup>1</sup>, Abundant Grace International Fellowship Shanghai<sup>2</sup>, Online Church Ministry<sup>3</sup>

[pauluseppang@gmail.com](mailto:pauluseppang@gmail.com)

## Abstract

*The metaphor of Jesus as the Good Shepherd in John 10:11 has long shaped Christian understandings of spiritual leadership, yet its relevance to contemporary pastoral leadership in Indonesia has received limited scholarly attention. This study aimed to examine the concept of the shepherd as a spiritual leader by drawing on Jesus' example and exploring its application within the Indonesian Christian community. The study was situated within the context of Indonesian churches. It employed exegetical and hermeneutical approaches, integrating biblical and literary analysis with observations from Indonesian scholarship and interviews with church pastors. The findings showed that effective spiritual leadership reflected Christ's example through sacrificial service, close pastoral relationships, moral integrity, unity, and care for the flock. The study concluded that the Good Shepherd model remained highly relevant for pastoral leadership in Indonesia and contributed a contextual biblical framework for developing Christ-centred spiritual leadership in contemporary Christian communities.*

**Keywords:** good Shepherd, hermeneutics, Indonesian Christianity, John 10:11, spiritual leadership

## Introduction

Leadership remains one of the most influential factors shaping the vitality, sustainability, and spiritual maturity of Christian communities. In contemporary ecclesiastical settings, pastors are increasingly expected to fulfil multiple responsibilities beyond preaching and sacramental ministry, including organizational leadership, pastoral care, discipleship, conflict resolution, and community transformation. These growing expectations are particularly evident in countries such as Indonesia, where Christian communities exist as religious minorities in many regions and where church leaders frequently navigate complex cultural, social, and religious environments. Consequently,

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identifying a biblically grounded and contextually relevant model of spiritual leadership has become an important concern for both theological scholarship and pastoral practice.<sup>1</sup>

The metaphor of the shepherd occupies a central place throughout Scripture as a representation of God's relationship with His people and of leadership within the covenant community. The Old Testament consistently portrays God as the Shepherd of Israel (Ps. 23; Jer. 23; Ezek. 34), while simultaneously condemning leaders who neglect or exploit the flock. This theological motif reaches its climax in the New Testament when Jesus proclaims, "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11), presenting Himself as the fulfilment of Old Testament expectations and as the ultimate model of sacrificial leadership. Biblical scholars have consistently argued that the shepherd metaphor provides a comprehensive theological framework for understanding pastoral ministry because it integrates guidance, protection, intimate knowledge of the flock, and self-sacrificial service.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, Peter extends this imagery to church leadership by exhorting elders to shepherd God's flock willingly and faithfully (1 Pet. 5:1–4), demonstrating that the Good Shepherd paradigm remained foundational for early Christian leadership.

The relevance of this biblical model has been reinforced by contemporary leadership studies. Leadership scholars define leadership as a process whereby an individual influences a group toward achieving a common goal.<sup>3</sup> Greenleaf's servant leadership theory argues that authentic leaders exist primarily to serve and develop those entrusted to their care and should be evaluated by whether followers become healthier, wiser, freer, and more capable of serving others.<sup>4</sup> Building upon this perspective, Blanchard contends that Jesus established servant leadership as the normative paradigm for Christian ministry through both His teaching and His personal example, particularly His willingness to serve and sacrifice for others (John 13:3–17).<sup>5</sup> Consequently, the image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd naturally intersects with servant leadership theory by emphasizing humility, relational care, sacrificial commitment, and service.

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<sup>1</sup> John Stott, *The Living Church: Convictions of a Lifelong Pastor* (Downers Grove: IL: InterVarsity, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> The Gospel According to John, *Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapid Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991).

<sup>3</sup> *Leadership: Theory and Practice* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2022).

<sup>4</sup> Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges, *Lead Like Jesus: Lessons from the Greatest Leadership Role Model of All Time* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005).

Although the theological significance of John 10 has received considerable scholarly attention, existing research has largely focused on biblical exegesis, Christological interpretation, or pastoral theology. Numerous biblical commentaries have examined the literary and theological dimensions of the Good Shepherd discourse, while recent Indonesian studies have explored its practical implications for pastoral leadership. Ton argues that Jesus serves as the ideal model of shepherding through exemplary conduct, sacrificial love, intimate relationships with the congregation, and faithful proclamation of salvation.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Frederik identifies leadership principles derived from John 10 that include divine calling, dependence upon God, Christ-centred ministry, sacrificial leadership, and commitment to the expansion of God's Kingdom.<sup>7</sup> These studies make significant contributions to pastoral theology but remain primarily normative and theological in orientation.

Despite these valuable contributions, an important knowledge gap remains. Previous studies have not sufficiently integrated rigorous biblical exegesis of John 10:11 with contemporary servant leadership theory while simultaneously examining how Indonesian pastors interpret and embody the Good Shepherd paradigm within diverse socio-cultural contexts. Existing scholarship tends to treat biblical interpretation, leadership theory, and pastoral experience as separate domains rather than as complementary perspectives capable of informing one another. Moreover, empirical reflections from Indonesian church leaders serving in minority Christian contexts remain relatively limited despite Indonesia's unique religious diversity and the distinct leadership challenges encountered by pastors ministering across different cultural settings. Addressing this gap is essential because contextual theological reflection enables biblical leadership principles to be understood not merely as doctrinal ideals but also as lived realities within specific ecclesial contexts.

Accordingly, this study develops a conceptual framework integrating three complementary perspectives. First, biblical hermeneutics provides the methodological foundation for interpreting John 10:11 within its literary, historical, and theological context. Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard emphasize that biblical interpretation seeks to

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<sup>6</sup> Ton, "Jesus as the Good Shepherd: A Model of Pastoral Leadership," *Jurnal Jaffray* 18, no. 22 (2020): 186–93.

<sup>7</sup> Frederik, "The Leadership Principles of Jesus in John 10:11," *Jurnal Teologi Berita Hidup* 5, no. 1 (2022): 52–61.

uncover the intended meaning of Scripture through sound hermeneutical principles.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, Stein argues that authorial intent remains central to responsible biblical interpretation, while Fee and Stuart stress the necessity of interpreting Scripture within both its historical context and enduring theological significance.<sup>9</sup> Second, biblical theology traces the continuity of the shepherd motif from the Old Testament through the ministry of Jesus and into the apostolic church. Third, servant leadership theory provides a contemporary leadership framework explaining how Jesus' shepherding ministry embodies ethical, relational, and sacrificial leadership. Together, these perspectives establish an integrated conceptual framework for examining spiritual leadership within the Indonesian church.

This study, therefore, aims to investigate Jesus' declaration as the Good Shepherd in John 10:11 through hermeneutical and exegetical analysis while examining its implications for spiritual leadership in the Indonesian Christian context. Specifically, the study seeks (1) to interpret the theological meaning of Jesus as the Good Shepherd within its canonical and historical context; (2) to identify the essential characteristics of spiritual leadership reflected in the Good Shepherd discourse; (3) to examine how Indonesian pastors understand and practice these leadership principles within their ministry contexts; and (4) to develop an integrated model of biblical spiritual leadership that bridges scriptural interpretation, servant leadership theory, and contemporary pastoral practice. By integrating biblical exegesis, leadership theory, and contextual pastoral experience, this study contributes both to theological scholarship and to the practical formation of Christian leaders serving in increasingly complex and multicultural societies.

## Method

This study employed a qualitative theological research design integrating biblical exegesis, hermeneutical interpretation, literature review, and empirical qualitative inquiry through semi-structured interviews. The research adopted an interpretive approach to examine Jesus' declaration as the Good Shepherd in John 10:11 and its implications for contemporary spiritual leadership within Indonesian Christianity. By combining textual

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<sup>8</sup> *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids Michigan: Zondervan Grand Rapids, 2017).

<sup>9</sup> Robert H. Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).

analysis with contextual field data, the study sought to bridge biblical theology and contemporary pastoral practice.

The exegetical component examined the literary, historical, and theological context of John 10:11 within the broader canonical development of the shepherd motif from the Old Testament to the New Testament. The empirical component explored how Indonesian pastors understand and implement the Good Shepherd paradigm in their ministry contexts.

### **Findings and Discussion**

This paper aims to explore the concept of shepherd as a spiritual leader, drawing from Jesus' example as the Good Shepherd in John 10:11. It examines the relevance of this model to spiritual leadership within the Christian community in Indonesia. The study employs both exegesis and hermeneutics methodologies, combining literature research with direct observations from current journals by Indonesian scholars and personal interviews with Indonesian pastors.

Klein, Bloomberg, and Hubbert Jr., in the opening sentence of their book *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, state that understanding the meaning of the Bible presents several challenges. While we may easily explain what the text says, agreeing on its intended meaning is more difficult. In other words, interpreting Scripture is often a complex and perplexing task.<sup>10</sup> They went further to explain hermeneutics, which describes the task of interpreting the meaning of the scriptures. The term derives from the Greek verb "hermeneuo," meaning "to explain, interpret, or translate," and the noun "hermeneia," meaning "interpretation" or "translation." They used two examples from the New Testament to illustrate this: Luke 24:27, where Jesus meets two disciples on the road to Emmaus after his resurrection and explains the scriptures about himself, and 1 Corinthians 12:10, where Paul refers to the gift of interpreting tongues. They concluded that hermeneutics involves the principles people use to understand the meaning of a message—whether written, oral, or visual—and to comprehend what it is attempting to communicate.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, Robert L. Hubbert Jr., *Craig L. Blomberg, Robert L. Hubbert Jr., and William W. Klein, Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Michigan: Zondervan Grand Rapids, 2017), 39.

<sup>11</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, Robert L. Hubbert Jr., 40.

Stein also uses the story in Luke 24:27 in his book *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible* to explain the word hermeneutics, but relating the noun “Hermes” formed from this verb to a Greek god who was the spokesman or interpreter for the other Gods. We can see this represented in the story when Paul healed a cripple at Lystra, and the people thought that the gods had come to visit them in Acts 14:12 “Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker.” He concluded with a statement that hermeneutics, which comes from these Greek words, simply describes the practice or discipline of interpretation. But also posing the questions on who determines the rules?<sup>12</sup> There are three perspectives to consider: the text itself, the reader, or the author, each of which could be seen as determining the meaning. Stein objectively discusses the pros and cons of interpreting the rules from each perspective. However, he subjectively argues that the author is the most qualified to determine the meaning of the text he wrote.<sup>13</sup>

Fee and Stuart support Stein's view, stating that the goal of good interpretation is simple: to uncover the "plain" meaning of the text, which aligns with the author's intended meaning.<sup>14</sup> However, this approach creates tension due to two influencing factors: the reader as an interpreter and the nature of scripture. As readers, we bring our own experiences, culture, and prior understanding of words and ideas to the text.<sup>15</sup> Secondly, the Bible is the Word of God expressed in human language within a historical context. It possesses both eternal relevance and historical particularity. Thus, interpreting the Bible necessitates addressing the "tension" between its timeless significance and its specific historical context.<sup>16</sup>

### **Shepherd in the Bible**

There were nine major scripture references of shepherds in the bible, four times in the Old Testament (Psalm 23; Jeremiah 23; Ezekiel 34; Zechariah 10) and five times in the New Testament (Matthew 18; Mark 6; Luke 15; John 10; 1 Peter 5). We will take

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<sup>12</sup> Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules*, 2011, 17.

<sup>13</sup> Robert H. Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules* (Grand Rapid: Michigan, William B. Eermans Publishing, 2011), 20.

<sup>14</sup> Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapid: Zondervan, 2014), 22.

<sup>15</sup> Fee and Stuart, 22.

<sup>16</sup> Fee and Stuart, 25.

a brief look at each of these mentions of shepherds in the Bible before taking a closer look at Jesus mentioned about Himself being a good shepherd in John 10:10.

In the Old Testament, David writes about God as his shepherd, followed by rebuke for a bad shepherd in Jeremiah 23, Ezekiel 34, and Zechariah 10, God's punishment for the lost sheep, and His promise of redemption and restoration. While in the New Testament, Jesus identifies himself as a good shepherd in Luke 15, and in Mark 6, he showed how he lived out that identity and applied the same title to the disciples in Matthew 18. John 10 describes the climax of the entire good shepherd tradition as it reflects on the cross and the resurrection. And three decades after the resurrection, we see Peter using the good shepherd as a model for the elders/pastors of the church in 1 Peter 5.<sup>17</sup>

### **Shepherd in the Old Testament**

In his book, *A Shepherd Look at Psalm 23*, Keller writes that David speaks with a strong sense of pride, devotion, and admiration of The Lord as his shepherd, knowing from his personal experience of being a shepherd himself, that the life of the sheep really depending on the owner, whether he is a good owner that will make the sheep flourish and thrive contentedly or a bad owner that will bring the sheep would struggle, starve, and suffer endless hardship. He openly boasted aloud that the Lord is his owner, his manager, and his shepherd.<sup>18</sup>

Jeremiah is reshaping David's personal journey into a journey of the nation through defeat, destruction, and dispersion to a vision of restoration and return. This retelling of the national story as a good shepherd required some dramatic changes and additions to the collection of images that make up the psalm.

Jerusalem falls, and Jeremiah is exiled to Egypt, where he dies. A few years later, writing from Babylon, Ezekiel's voice is raised, and that voice includes an expansion of David's (and Jeremiah's) great hymn about the good shepherd.<sup>19</sup>

And the last-mentioned shepherd in the Old Testament is from Zachariah, who embraces the major changes and additions made by Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and builds it

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<sup>17</sup> Kenneth Bailey, *The Good Shepherd: A Thousand-Year Journey from Psalm 23 to the New Testament* (United Kingdom: SPCK Publishing, 2015), 27.

<sup>18</sup> W. Phillip Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 18.

<sup>19</sup> Bailey, *The Good Shepherd: A Thousand-Year Journey from Psalm 23 to the New Testament*, 101.

on the foundation of Psalm 23. The significant addition to the story is the dramatic transformation of sheep into a war horse, a battle bow, and soldiers who defeat and then humiliate the enemy.<sup>20</sup>

### **Shepherd in the New Testament**

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus demonstrates how the good shepherd manages a large group of scattered sheep. The chapter also presents an intense debate and struggle between the bad shepherd (Herod) and the good shepherd (Jesus).<sup>21</sup>

While in Mark 6, Jesus applied his understanding of a good shepherd to mitigate a crisis he faced in his ministry, in Luke 15, he presents his understanding of a good shepherd in two parables. T. W. Manson has insightfully observed, "But the characteristic feature of these two parables is not so much the joy over the repentant sinner as the Divine love that goes out to seek the sinner before he repents."<sup>22</sup>

W. D. Davies and Dale Allison have succinctly written about Matthew 18:10-14: "Throughout Christian history the man with the sheep has been identified with Jesus himself, and our parable has often been conflated with Jn 10. . . . One guesses that the First Evangelist likewise identified the shepherd with Jesus and took the logic of the parable to be this: God (v. 14) approves of the actions of the shepherd Jesus, who set out for the lost little ones (vv. 13-14), and those who believe in Jesus must do what he did."<sup>23</sup>

In a parable (Luke 15), a historical event (Mark 6), and another parable (Matthew 18), Jesus affirms that the promises are in the process of being fulfilled through him. Now, in John 10, he openly declares, "I am the good shepherd." The promises of the centuries were finally being realized, but the manner of their fulfilment came as a great shock, involving high cost. While the concept of cost isn't new, the intensity of it is unprecedented.<sup>24</sup> In the next part of this paper, the author would like to closely examine and interpret John 10:11.

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<sup>20</sup> Bailey, 38.

<sup>21</sup> Bailey, 205.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Walter Manson, *Thomas Walter Manson, The Sayings of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 2012), 284.

<sup>23</sup> William David Davies and Dale C Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, International Critical Commentary* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1988), 773.

<sup>24</sup> Bailey, *The Good Shepherd: A Thousand-Year Journey from Psalm 23 to the New Testament*, 306.

In 1 Peter 5:1-4, the apostle presents a brief discussion of Christian leadership by turning to the picture of a shepherd and his flock. His opening reference to the shepherd and the sheep is in 1 Peter 2:25, which says, “For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls.” Then, at the beginning of chapter 5, Peter returns to the imagery of the shepherd and his flock.<sup>25</sup>

### **Jesus as the Good Shepherd in John 10:11**

In his commentary, Henry explains that John 10 is a parable of similitude, taken from the customs of the East, in the management of sheep. Men's dependence on God as their creator is called the sheep of his pasture, and while in this world are exposed to deceivers and persecutors. The great Shepherd knows them, will guard, guide, and walk before them, as Eastern shepherds went before their sheep.<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, in *Commentary on John*, Burge and Hill stated that the message of John as the Fourth Gospel is clothed with allusions and metaphors that spring from first-century Judaism. Even acquainted well with Greek influences, the Gospel's text is explained best when seen as firmly rooted in the Old Testament and Palestinian Judaism.<sup>27</sup>

John 10 as a metaphor is also confirmed in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, which explains that this chapter comprises an extended metaphor comparing Jesus and His followers to a shepherd and his sheep. And adding the connection between the previous chapter of the healing of the blind to this chapter, as John joined the narratives of the chapters without a break, and giving the reference to the blind man in John 10:21, even though the actual event is almost three months apart.<sup>28</sup>

Henry continues with describing Christ as a good Shepherd, compared to many hirelings that careless in their duty and hurt the flock with their neglect. Christ, setting

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<sup>25</sup> Bailey, 341.

<sup>26</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on The Whole Bible* (Peabody: Hendrikson Publishers, 2013), 2185.

<sup>27</sup> Gary M. Burge and Andrew E Hill, *Gary M. Burge and Andrew E Hill, Commentary on John: From The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapid: Baker Book, 2012), 12.

<sup>28</sup> Michael Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham, *The Moody Bible Commentary, A One Volume Commentary of the Whole Bible by the Faculty of Moody Bible Institue* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2014), 4443.

himself as an example, and offering his grace by laying down his life for our redemption, not for his doctrine but for his sheep. He died in our place so that we might live in Him.<sup>29</sup>

And as a good shepherd, Jesus comes into a two-way intimate relationship with His sheep (I know My own, and My own know me), reflecting the relationship shared by the Father and Son (verse 15). This relationship can be established through The Shepherd's death as a substitutionary death, one life for another, as also written in 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 Peter 2:2:24, 3:18.<sup>30</sup>

God is often described as the shepherd of Israel in the Old Testament, and Moses, David, and many of the patriarchs were also shepherds. Leadership in Israel meant shepherding, and bad leadership or kings during the Israelite time were called false shepherds. Jesus is using this same pastoral motif for himself in the event of feeding the five thousand recorded in the gospel of Mark. And similar to what was mentioned before regarding his intimate relationship with his sheep, he has this devotion to the sheep to be willing to die for them and knowing them deeply as the Father knows him.<sup>31</sup>

Ryle summarizes beautifully in his expository of the Gospel of John, and makes mention of Christ like a good shepherd knows all His believing people, cares tenderly for all his believing people, and lays down his life for the sheep. And he did it once for all when He was crucified for them. The sheep are saved forevermore, because the Good Shepherd died for them.<sup>32</sup>

### **Definition of Leadership**

Before we reflect on Jesus' example of a Good Shepherd as a spiritual leader, we will take a deeper look at the definition of leadership and, in particular, highlight the concept of servant leadership.

Leadership is defined as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal."<sup>33</sup> Several other authors would be adding more to

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<sup>29</sup> Henry, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on The Whole Bible*, 2186.

<sup>30</sup> Vanlaningham, *The Moody Bible Commentary, A One Volume Commentary of the Whole Bible by the Faculty of Moody Bible Institute*, 4445.

<sup>31</sup> Hill, Gary M. Burge and Andrew E Hill, *Commentary on John: From The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary*, 73.

<sup>32</sup> J. C. Ryle, *Gospel of John, Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* (Abbotsford: Aneko Press, 2019), 216.

<sup>33</sup> P. G Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice* (New York: SAGE Publications, 2018), 5.

this definition, but will include keywords as described by Northouse, as quoted above. These keywords will include Process, influence, group of individuals, and common goal.

In his Servant Leadership theory, Greenleaf explained that it is rooted in the idea of leaders being primarily concerned with serving the best interests of their followers.<sup>34</sup> In determining what type of effect a servant leader should have on his/her followers, Greenleaf considered the “best test” to be: “Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?”<sup>35</sup> In the continuation of his book, *The Power of Servant-Leader*, Greenleaf added this line: “And what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will she or he benefit, or, at least, not be further deprived?”<sup>36</sup>

Adding to what Greenleaf described as servant leadership, there are two other literature sources to share. Blanchard concludes that servant leadership is a mandate from Jesus. He is referring to Jesus’ instruction to His first disciples and those who would like to follow Him that leadership was to be first and foremost an act of service. He placed no restrictions or limitations of time, place, or situation that would allow us to exempt ourselves from His command.<sup>37</sup>

And lastly, Jesus’ vivid example of servant leadership was seen at the moment when he washed his disciples’ feet as captured in John 13:3-5 and 13:12-17. Jesus has become the ultimate role model in the Christian faith as a servant leader and is calling us to follow his example.

### **A Good Shepherd as Spiritual Leaders**

From Jesus’ comparison of good and bad shepherds in his parables, we can learn his heart posture of a good leader that entering the ministry with their eyes on Jesus and follows his example, while the false shepherd is those that doing it with a selfish motive.<sup>38</sup>

And summarizing from his chapter on how to become a good shepherd, Mills mentioned signs of a good shepherd, taken from John 10: Leads his sheep (v.3), knows

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<sup>34</sup> Greenleaf K Robert, *The Power of Servant Leadership* (San Francisco: Berrett Kohler Publishers, 1998), 7.

<sup>35</sup> Robert, 13.

<sup>36</sup> Robert, 87.

<sup>37</sup> Ken Blanchard and Renee Broadwell, *Ken Blanchard and Renee Broadwell, Servant Leader in Action: How You Can Achieve Great Relationships and Results* (Oakland: Berrett-Koehler Publisher, 2018), 16.

<sup>38</sup> Ryle, *Gospel of John, Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, 210.

his sheep by name (v.3, 14), known by the sheep (v.10:4,5), stays with the sheep (v.13), keeps the church family together (v.12), notices the problem of the sheep (v.12), delivers his sheep from captivity (v.12), wants to have more sheep (v.16), loves the sheep and not the money (v.12), gives his live (v.18).<sup>39</sup>

### **Interpretation from Indonesian Theologians on Jesus as a Good Shepherd**

The author will present two journals by Indonesian scholars that explore Jesus' metaphor as the Good Shepherd and its reflection in spiritual leadership principles. In his journal published in December 2023, Sekundus Septo Pigang Ton writes about "Jesus as an Example to be a Good Shepherd According to the Perspective of John 10:11-16." His findings indicate that good shepherds should fulfil their duties by living and imitating Jesus' example during His time on earth, encompassing His life, suffering, death, and resurrection. A good shepherd must set a moral example, proclaim safety, be closely connected with the flock, and have the courage to sacrifice themselves, thereby reflecting Jesus' work, passion, death, and resurrection.<sup>40</sup>

His theological interpretation of this passage is that shepherding, as a calling from Christ, is a noble vocation that requires being conducted with responsibility, humility, and sacrifice. Throughout His life, Jesus exemplified what it means to be a good shepherd. Four key concepts for applying this shepherding model are: setting a good example, sharing the good news of salvation, being a shepherd who is closely connected with the flock, and showing a willingness to sacrifice.<sup>41</sup>

The author would also like to highlight the journal by Hanny Frederik, titled "Principles of Pastoral Leadership Based on John 10:1-21 and Their Implementation in Church Leadership," published in December 2020. Frederik emphasizes that shepherding leadership must adhere to principles derived from the Word of God. Through her study of John 10:1-21, she identifies several leadership principles applicable to church leadership, including the importance of God's calling, reliance on His providence, being Christ-centered, willingness to sacrifice, recognizing the equality between ministers and

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<sup>39</sup> Dad Heward Mills, *What It Means To Become A Shepherd* (London: Parchment House, 2014), 160.

<sup>40</sup> Sekundus Septo Pigang Ton, "Yesus Sebagai Teladan Untuk Menjadi Gembala Yang Baik Berdasarkan Perspektif Injil Yohanes 10:11-16," *Miktab Jurnal Teologi Dan Pelayanan Kristiani* 3, no. 2 (2023): 192.

<sup>41</sup> Ton, 215.

congregants in having direct access to God, and focusing on the expansion of the Kingdom of God.<sup>42</sup>

Incorporating insights from the commentary and application derived from the author's hermeneutic literature study, the main themes for emulating Jesus as the Good Shepherd to become effective spiritual leaders include following Jesus' example (both moral and conduct), knowing and keeping the flock united while also reaching out to those outside the fold, and demonstrating a willingness to sacrifice.

### **Christianity in Indonesia**

Between the 2nd and the 4th centuries, both Hinduism and Buddhism came to Indonesia and spread their influences throughout the archipelago. Then, through various trading with the Middle East, in the 14th century, Islam started to flourish until there were 20 Islamic kingdoms in Indonesia by the end of the 15th century. These times also indicate a race between Islam and Christianity in Indonesia as Christianity subsequently began to come through the Portuguese arrival that brought Catholic influence, and then followed by the Dutch that brought Calvinist and Lutheran influences about the same time.<sup>43</sup>

Despite being the second-largest religion after Islam, Christianity comprises only 10-11% of the total population and sometimes faces challenges from the majority religion, both directly and indirectly. This presents a complex challenge for shepherding the flock, particularly in the region where the author had the privilege of interviewing its spiritual leaders (church pastors).

### **Pastor Yulius Ahiong from Pelita Church Community, Jambi, South Sumatra**

Among Indonesian provinces in 2018, South Sumatra reported the eleventh-smallest number of Christians (129,068) or 0.453625183% of Christians within Indonesia. South Sumatra had the third-smallest percentage (among religions reported in the province) of Christians (1.57%), including the second-smallest percentage of Protestants (0.97%) and eighth-smallest percentage of Catholics (0.6%).

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<sup>42</sup> Hanny Frederik, "Prinsip-Prinsip Kepemimpinan Penggembalaan Berdasarkan Yohanes 10:1-21 Dan Implementasinya Dalam Kepemimpinan Gereja," *Jurnal Ilmu Teologi Dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen* 1, no. 2 (2020): 69–86.

<sup>43</sup> Jan Sihar Aritonang and Karel Steenbrink, *A History of Christianity in Indonesia* (Netherlands: Brill, 2008), 20.

Pastor Yulius founded Pelita Community Church in March 2004, starting with a small house church of 35 people. It has since expanded to three other provinces, impacting 70 locations, developing over 250 local leaders, and encompassing 3,800 church members spread across more than 100 churches and 350 small groups.

He began his ministry by serving faithfully in one local church for 12 years, progressing from a regular worker to an assistant to the senior pastor. Eventually, he felt God's calling to plant and start his own church 20 years ago. His initial understanding of being a shepherd came from a conversation with his senior pastor about his desire to get married. The pastor responded that Jesus, as the good shepherd, would provide a wife, a place to stay, and food on the table. This image has stayed with him ever since.

In Indonesian, the same word, "Gembala," is used for both "shepherd" and "pastor." As Pastor Yulius grew in faith and service, he learned about being a shepherd from his senior pastor. Upon starting his own church, he encountered another pastor practicing collective leadership, a concept he embraced. His church network now has ten elders, aligning with the early church model mentioned by Peter in 1 Peter 5:1-4.

Pastor Yulius believes that being a shepherd involves more than building relationships and growing the congregation. It requires being a father, a friend, and caring for people. Importantly, it involves helping the congregation find God's vision for their lives and supporting them in achieving it. He emphasizes that Christian maturity is determined not by how long one has been a Christian, but by how well they fulfill God's calling and plan for their lives.

His advice for new or upcoming shepherds in his community is to focus on the people they are training, directing, and shepherding, rather than getting bogged down with programs or administrative tasks. He also encourages sensitivity to God's leading in finding new and creative ways, rather than merely following old patterns. He stresses the importance of maintaining humility and respect towards previous or older leaders, while also being open to new methods and traditions.

### **Pastor Doni Fredi from Abbalove Ministries, Bali**

The dominant religion in Bali is not Islam, but Hinduism, with 86% of the population adherents. Christianity is a minor religion (<1%). Bali is one of the interesting examples in Indonesia, as one of the regions that did not accept the influence of Islam,

and also against the influence and penetration of Christianity. But after a while, some people embrace Christianity even when it costs them to be excommunicated from their own families and community.

Pastor Doni, originally from Medan, moved to Jakarta for university and was later sent by his church to Bali in 1996 to start and plant a church. He has served as a church leader for 28 years and was formally established as a pastor in 2010. Interestingly, he has shepherding experience from his hometown, where he tended to 20 goats belonging to his family.

While this experience is quite rare in Indonesia, and although there are differences between shepherding sheep and goats as well as cultural variations between the Middle East and Indonesia, he has found some principles from his past that are valuable in his current role. He notes that his primary task as a shepherd is to ensure his flock is well cared for, with sufficient food, safe commutes to and from pasture, and that they remain within the flock.

He applies several key practices: maintaining the congregation on the right path and providing adequate care are essential to being a good shepherd. Preventing the congregation from straying also involves guarding against false teachings. Additionally, he strives to set a good example, as true shepherds in the Middle East lead from the front, with the sheep following and recognizing their voice. This contrasts with shepherding goats, where he had to guide them from behind, often using a stick for reinforcement.

One significant lesson he has learned over the years is the importance of sacrifice. Inspired by the shepherd's willingness to search for the lost sheep and leave the 99 behind, he has experienced personal sacrifices, such as losing his privacy when he first moved to Bali and lived with people as a single man. He remains available at all hours to meet the needs of his congregation.

Pastor Doni summarizes that being a shepherd or spiritual leader is more than a job or responsibility; it is a calling that requires serving at any cost. He is motivated by his church's core value, "Christ Servant in Brotherly Love," which emphasizes being a faithful steward rather than an owner of the flock. He advises younger shepherds to stay resilient and view their role as a divine calling rather than merely a career option.

## Conclusion

In this paper, the author explores the concept of a shepherd as a spiritual leader by employing both exegesis and hermeneutics methodologies, combining with literature research globally and specific to the Indonesian context, and conducting interviews with Indonesian Pastors. It is very interesting to see that with or without prior experience of being a shepherd, the metaphor of Jesus as a Good Shepherd transcends well to inspire the spiritual leaders in Indonesia to embrace their role as a shepherd for their congregation, specifically through the verse in John 10:11, but also being enriched and emphasized by other references to shepherds in the bible.

One of the Christian writers in Indonesia, Tinambunan, in his writing “*Metafora Gembala Dalam Perjanjian Baru (Metaphor of The Shepherd in The New Testament)*” explains that this metaphor about the shepherd and the sheep is a metaphor that is often used in the Bible, both in the Old and New Testaments. The reason is that shepherding is one of the most ancient occupations, especially among the nomadic community, which was the Israelites during that time. In the New Testament, the word is often used to describe Jesus and the workers in the church or spiritual leaders.<sup>44</sup>

The author would like to conclude that God is often described as the shepherd of Israel in the Old Testament, and Moses, David, and many of the patriarchs were also shepherds. Leadership in Israel meant shepherding, and bad leadership or kings during the Israelite time were called false shepherds. So, when Jesus is using this pastoral motive repeatedly for himself as well as to establish his disciples as spiritual leaders of the flocks, it comes almost naturally for people from different cultural backgrounds, such as Indonesia, to embrace this concept of a shepherd’s characteristic as a spiritual leader for the Christian community.

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<sup>44</sup> Igansius Budiono Edison R.L. Tinambunan, Benny Khong Wing Phang, *Akulah Gembala Yang Baik: Sebuah Refleksi Tentang Tugas Penggembalaan Dalam Gereja* (Malang: Kairmelindo, 2013), 26.

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