

SHEPHERDING LIKE JESUS FACILITATOR GUIDE



**SOUTH CAROLINA
BAPTIST CONVENTION**

The call to pastor is a call to shepherd the flock of God entrusted to you (1 Peter 5:2). It is a worthy calling to be fulfilled with caution and dependence on the One who called you. What does it mean to shepherd God's flock? What does that require of us, as men seeking to fulfill our calling in the local church? What challenges can we anticipate? What practices should we employ? While Scripture doesn't give us all the answers to these and many other questions related to fulfilling the call of pastor/elder, we do have an example in the life and ministry of Jesus that can guide our efforts.

This Facilitator Guide and accompanying Pastor Workbook, based on Andrew Hébert's, *Shepherding Like Jesus: Returning to the Wild Idea that Character Matters in Ministry*, are intended to help you prepare to facilitate a pastor cohort or small group. Each session includes intentional ways to facilitate discussion and maximize coaching environments essential to further their learning and preparation to grow as pastoral leaders and shepherd those in their midst.

As facilitator, you have the privilege to guide pastoral leaders on a journey to shepherd in reflection of their Savior. Pastoral ministry is a marathon of personal development and sacrificial service to God's Church. So, let's help pastors set a healthy pace and join them on their journey to bring glory to God!

May the Lord equip you and strengthen His Church through this resource and the faithfulness of men seeking to serve for God's glory.

Shepherding Like Jesus Facilitator Guide

Written by Clint Carter and James Nugent

SCBaptist Shepherd Team

2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART ONE: PREPARING THE FACILITATOR

Each Session at a Glance	01
The Role of Facilitator	02
Facilitator Gold Standards	04

PART TWO: LEADING SELF SESSIONS

Orientation	06
Session One: Pastoral Character & the Long Haul	10
Session Two: Leading from Dependence & Brokenness	16
Session Three: Leading with Humility & Holy Hunger	22
Session Four: Leading with Mercy & Integrity	27
Session Five: Leading Through Conflict & Faithful Endurance	32

PREPARING THE FACILITATOR

EACH SESSION AT A GLANCE

Pre-Work

Each session begins with pre-work for pastors to complete prior to their cohort attendance.

Each lesson includes:

- Inductive Bible study
- Recommended resource review

Pastors will be guided by a Pastor Workbook and you as their facilitators. The pastor should bring his completed lesson with him to cohort for further interaction and feedback. Many of the elements in the pre-work will be incorporated in the cohort session, so advance completion is encouraged.

Cohort Session

Cohorts will meet monthly for approximately two hours. The facilitator will utilize a guide to engage participants in discussion and interactive learning to help them complete and refine the desired outcomes for each lesson. Participants will often share their pre-work with their peers to gain feedback and further the development of their preparation to lead a church through a revitalization process.

Each session will move through **Warm-Up -> Truth -> Wisdom -> Context -> Prayer**.

Participants will be guided through each unique session by a range of learning engagements and applications using training techniques to help each other explore, experience, evaluate, and be equipped as revitalization pastors and replanters. It is highly recommended that facilitators complete their training and work through each session before leading their cohort.

As participants learn new skills and further develop their ideas, they will also form a peer community of pastors and practitioners to lend support and wisdom extending well beyond the scope of the cohort.

Post-Session

Facilitators are encouraged to interact and pray for participants in between each session to provide ongoing encouragement and accountability. Simple reminders of upcoming meetings, opportunities to gather for fellowship together, prayer request text thread, etc. are all helpful ways to provide ongoing support for leaders.

THE ROLE OF FACILITATOR

As a cohort facilitator, you will guide the pastors on a journey of church revitalization. As a guide, your investment in the pastor's development will require you to fulfill several key roles often all in the same day:

- **Facilitator**

First and foremost, Leading Self is designed with intentional session to help pastors develop as leaders. Each cohort session will explore a new essential in three sections: Biblical Truth, Wisdom to Consider, and Contextual Application. This guide seeks to prepare you for each intentionally designed session that will challenge the participants to lead in faithful obedience to reach their community and strengthen the church they have been called to serve. As facilitator, your preparation and guidance are keys to the cohort's success.

- **Teacher**

Second, this guide contains short segments called Directive Teaching to allow you or someone you enlist to provide instruction for the participants. 90% of each cohort session is driven by the participant's pre-work and interaction around each topic leaving only 10% for instruction. It is not the facilitator's role to be the expert in the room as each pastor is serving in a different context with unique circumstances. As teacher, your best role is to speak from experience to equip the pastor to lead well in his context as guided by the Holy Spirit.

- **Coach**

Third, your pastors need a coach to ask the right questions and help them consider their options as they work through the lessons. Each session includes several open-ended questions to equip you to guide discovery and challenge pastors to overcome barriers as they seek to apply the content. Your role as coach is to help them reach their maximum potential as pastor and leader.

- **Accountability partner**

This cohort is designed to offer a slow pace of interactive learning that will require accountability among participants. To ensure completion and implementation, the facilitator should provide accountability for full participation by completing assigned pre-work, making cohort sessions a priority, and meeting with a mentor regularly. Understanding the tendencies of each pastor, the facilitator can maintain regular contacts to keep each participant progressing and growing as a leader.

- **Encourager**

Pastoral ministry is hard work over a long period of time, so each facilitator should be a constant source of encouragement personally while guiding a healthy cohort that lends support and care to all participants. Pastors should look forward to cohort because of who will be there and the encouragement they will receive.

- **Prayer partner**

As facilitator, you will have a first-hand knowledge to the needs, struggles, and victories of each pastor in the cohort. Whether you pray with the pastor in person or alone in your own prayer closet, the facilitator is a vital partner and intercessor. Kingdom advance in our at-risk churches is a spiritual work requiring continual petitions before God's throne of grace.

FACILITATOR GOLD STANDARDS

As facilitator, your interaction with cohort participants will greatly impact their learning experience. To better equip you to make the most of your times together, here are a few marks to aim for as you trust in God to work in your midst.

1. Be Prepared for Anything.

- a. Study the lesson and resources ahead of time so your presentation will be natural and well planned
 - Know the objectives
 - Practice the learning techniques
 - Practice your pace
 - Know your audience well
- b. Enlist help as needed so that you won't be busy with last minute details
 - Help with preparation or obtaining resources
 - Access to meeting location
 - Preparing guest speakers
 - Navigating technology
- c. Purchase/Print everything you need for cohort sessions
 - Material lists are provided with each session
 - Copies may be needed
 - Will you provide refreshments?
- d. Remind your participants, host, and partners in advance of each session.
- e. Pray for each participant, his church, and your facilitation.

2. Be Earlier than Early.

- a. Set up the room.
- b. Check technology before it's needed.
- c. Pray.
- d. Allow time for conversation with participants upon arrival.

3. Create & Maintain the Right Learning Environment.

a. Space

- Remove clutter.
- Arrange a room to facilitate face-to-face interaction.
- Set the mood with music.
- Have materials on hand and in place.

b. Participants

- Understand their personalities.
- Know their context.
- Keep everyone involved.
- Help them progress.

c. Rhythm

- Guide the energy level.
- Take breaks as needed.
- Create helpful routines.

4. Wear the Right Hat at the Right Time.

- a. Facilitation requires different actions at different times, so know your role for each section.
- b. When giving directions, be clear.
- c. When teaching, be concise.
- d. Practice active listening.
- e. Stay fully engaged at all times.
- f. Be flexible and adaptive.
- g. Be confident and yet open to feedback.
- h. Above all, be a servant.

This cohort exists to equip pastors so that they become more effective leaders seeking to lead their congregation to share the hope of the Gospel in their community. As facilitator, you have the privilege of guiding pastors and their churches on their revitalization journey as a 1) servant, 2) partner, and 3) practitioner in a Kingdom Advance.

SHEPHERDING LIKE JESUS SESSIONS

ORIENTATION SESSION (ONE HOUR + LUNCH)

Materials Needed:

- Tear Sheets & Markers
- 3x3 Post It Notes
- Writing pens & Journal/notebook
- Shepherding Like Jesus Pastor Workbook
- Shepherding Like Jesus: Returning to the Wild Idea that Character Matters in Ministry by Andrew Hébert

Welcome: Share Your Call to Ministry (10 minutes)

Directions: Form groups of 3 or 4 and take 2 minutes (yes only 2 minutes) to introduce yourself, where are you serving, and share how God called you to ministry.

- Call them back together and share how God called you to ministry.

Transition: Now that we know a few new friends, let's study God's Word for a few minutes together.

TRUTH: Exegete 1 Peter 5:1-4 together (15 minutes)

Directions: We are going to exegete a passage of Scripture together as if we were preparing a sermon for Sunday. I'll guide us through a series of questions that need your short, pointed responses to allow for multiple answers. But here's the challenge, we have to do this in 10 minutes or less!

- Ask pastors to read the text aloud.
- What do you believe is the main idea of this passage? (Allow for multiple responses but try to collaborate them into a shared statement for the group. Then write the statement on the top of a tear sheet.)
- How can we divide the passage into teaching points? (Outline it for them on a tear sheet)
- What are potential applications for your congregation? (Make a list)
- What illustrations might be helpful for understanding and application? (Make a list)

Transition: For some of us, this 10-minute sprint to a sermon is normal life. We love studying Scripture, but we rarely have enough time to prepare the sermons we've been trained to write. Something always interrupts us, crowds out our scheduled time, or the fatigue of being pastor week after week doesn't allow our spiritual batteries to fully recharge and our sermons begin to suffer. And if we slowed down long enough to evaluate the fruit of our ministry, we would realize our ability to shepherd others is probably also suffering. The One, who is your Good Shepherd, will also equip you to shepherd the flock entrusted to you! One day there will be a crown of unfading glory waiting for you, but until then we must remain faithful.

Each session of *Shepherding Like Jesus* will remind you of Biblical truths by encouraging you to slow down and study Scripture for your own sanctification and not for your next sermon. After a personal Bible study, you'll be assigned a reading assignment from the book *Shepherding Like Jesus* to serve as our "Wisdom." And then you'll be asked to apply what you have learned to your life or "Context." Every lesson will follow the same pattern - Truth, Wisdom, Context.

And then when you come to your cohort session, we will follow the same flow using interactive ways to help you process and apply the content together - Truth, Wisdom, Context. Today we started with Truth from 1 Peter 5, now let's transition to "wisdom" with a brainstorm activity before applying these to your context.

WISDOM: Brainstorm - Identifying the Greatest Challenges to Pastoral Ministry (10 minutes)

Directions: Form 3 groups to provide three different perspectives to answering the question, "What are the greatest challenges pastors face hindering their ability to shepherd the flock as described in 1 Peter 5:1-4?"

- Group One: Use a tear sheet to list as many personal challenges a pastor might face within his own life and family.
- Group Two: Use a tear sheet to list as many challenges within the congregation of the church he seeks to shepherd.
- Group Three: Use a tear sheet to list as many challenges pastors face outside of the congregation.
- Allow about 5 minutes for responses, then ask each group to read their list aloud.

Personal
Challenges:

Congregational
Challenges:

External
Challenges:

Group Think: Let's identify what we perceive is the greatest challenge on each list and work together to address it Biblically as if we are shepherding each other. (10 minutes)

Directions: Ask the participants to write their initials one time on each of the three tear sheets (personal, church, outside the congregation) marking which one they believe would be their greatest challenge from each list.

- Choose the challenge that received the most votes on each sheet and ask,
 - If a pastor friend called you and confessed this challenge to you during your conversation, what Biblical counsel would you offer him? What verse would you read together? What would you encourage him to do?
- Repeat for each of the three sheets.

Transition: For many of us, this is a live exercise - you are in this reality right now! One or more of these challenges is your current situation that you are asking God to resolve. For others, there are names and faces attached to some of these challenges - that deacon that opposes you, the member that left the church because of your decision, the community that lost respect for your church, etc. This is more than an academic exercise. How will you shepherd like Jesus during any or all these challenges?

CONTEXT: Peer Coaching (10 minutes)

Directions: Find a partner that you know little about and get eye to eye with him for our closing exercise that'll help us apply what we've learned to our context. (Go ahead and move into partners before I give you further instructions)

- I want you to repeat what we just did together, but on a one-on-one basis.
 - Share your greatest challenge to shepherding like Jesus.
 - Allow your pastor to shepherd you by 1) reading Scripture with you related to the challenge; 2) Praying for you.
 - Switch places and repeat.
- Before we dismiss, let me encourage you to swap contact information with the pastor that just prayed for you and then follow up with each other in about a week.

CLOSING: Praying 1 Peter 5:1-4

Close the session by praying for the pastors using 1 Peter 5:1-4 as a guide.

- Thank God for the opportunity to shepherd alongside other pastors/elders
- Ask God to grow their capacity to willingly, and eagerly shepherd God's flock
- Ask God to guard against the listed temptations - power, greed, lack of love for others

NEXT STEPS:

- Explain the purpose of cohort and invite pastors to continue
- Complete Session 1 before next cohort
- Next cohort date: _____
- Questions?

BREAK FOR LUNCH

SESSION ONE

SHEPHERDING LIKE JESUS - PASTORAL CHARACTER & THE LONG HAUL (120 MINS)

Core Question: What kind of man must I become to be a faithful pastor over the long haul?

Session 1 Outcomes

1. Pastors will understand how celebrity culture and performance metrics have reshaped ministry.
2. Pastors will consider how gifting without character can be dangerous.
3. Pastors will be encouraged to rediscover Jesus' definition of success.
4. Pastors will have opportunities to begin forming a picture of Christlike pastoral character.
5. Pastors will be challenged to commit to letting Jesus shape who they are, not just what they do.

Materials Needed:

- Tear Sheets & Markers
- Shepherding Like Jesus Pastor Workbook
- Shepherding Like Jesus: Returning to the Wild Idea that Character Matters in Ministry by Andrew Hébert

Welcome & Introductions (10 minutes)

Directions: To help us get to know one another a little better, introduce yourself (name, where you serve, how long you have been there) and one thing you hope this cohort will accomplish in your life.

Opening Discussion: The World Pastors Are Leading In (15 minutes)

Pastoral ministry today exists in a very different environment than it did even one generation ago.

- Visibility is rewarded.
- Growth is celebrated.
- Influence is amplified.
- Speed is expected.

But Scripture calls pastors to something deeper and slower; faithfulness shaped by character. Here's a quote from our primary resource by Andrew Hébert, "Many pastors' gifting has taken them where their character cannot keep them."

Discussion Questions:

1. When people talk about a "successful pastor," what do they usually mean?
2. What pressures do pastors feel today that weren't as intense years ago?
3. When pastors fail, what do we often discover was missing?

Transition: What is success in pastoral ministry? Is it numbers? Is it longevity? (Only 1 in 10 who start in the ministry will finish.) Is it reputation? (What people think of you.) Or is it becoming more like Jesus?

Prayer

TRUTH: Luke 18:9-14 (25 minutes)

Directions: Let's reflect again on the Scripture passages you studied in preparation for today.

- Ask a participant to read Luke 18:9-14.
- Discussion Question:
 - What warnings from this passage might specifically apply to us as pastors?

Transition: We all have tendencies and temptations, but thankfully we have Scripture like the Beatitudes to remind us of the kind of people Jesus is actively forming, especially those He entrusts with others. For pastors, the Beatitudes shape: 1) How we relate to God – dependence, hunger, trust; 2) How we relate to ourselves – honesty, humility, repentance; 3) How we relate to people – mercy, patience, peacemaking; 4) How we endure opposition – faithfulness over time. Let's read the Beatitudes together and consider how we can apply them to our lives.

- Ask different participants to read Matthew 5:3-12 and Luke 10:38-42
- Discussion Questions:
 - Which Beatitude speaks most clearly to pastoral life right now?
 - How do these Scriptures challenge the modern definitions of pastoral success?
 - How are these verses challenging you personally today?

My False Beatitude: What cultural beatitude are you most tempted to adopt? (10 minutes)

Directions: Let's slow down for a minute and allow God to speak through reflection on what we just read and inspection of our current reality. Take a minute to reflect on the beatitudes again and notice the way they are written: Blessed are the _____ , for they will

_____ .

- Consider your own heart and the reoccurring internal voice that tempts to deceive you with a false beatitude. Example: Blessed are the best preachers, for they will draw a larger crowd. Or another example: Blessed are those who never take a vacation, they will get more done.
- What is the false beatitude that echoes in your mind often? Write it down and be ready to share it with the group.

Transition: "Jesus knew that if He didn't redefine blessing, even pastors would chase the wrong thing." Let's take a break and when we return, we will review the opening chapters of *Shepherding Like Jesus*.

BREAK

Wisdom: Chapters 1 & 2 of *Shepherding Like Jesus*:

Personal Story: Before we jump into the first two chapters of the book, let me share a quick story about a time when I developed an attitude that endangered my ministry. (Being transparent will help gain credibility as a facilitator and increase trust in the room. What story could you share that you've learned from or a current attitude you're asking God to reshape by His grace?) Transition to debriefing the first 2 chapters. (5 minutes)

Note: Prepare to share a personal story for emphasis and transparency

Practitioner Perspective-Guided Debrief: In preparation for today, you were asked to read the first two chapters of *Shepherding Like Jesus*. Let's share some of our responses to the questions you answered. Our author listed "Five Attitudes That Endanger Pastors":

1. **Fame - Wanting to Be Known More Than Faithful**
2. **Infidelity - When Private Compromise Grows in the Dark**
3. **Fighting - Needing to Win Instead of Shepherd**
4. **Finances - When Money Becomes Pressure or Escape**
5. **Fatigue - When Exhaustion Shapes Our Spiritual Life**

5 Bad Attitudes

Fame
Infidelity
Fighting
Finances
Fatigue

Let's discuss these together in a safe, trusting environment. Nothing shared here, leaves here. (20 minutes)

- Discussion Questions:
 - How can ministry success feed unhealthy attitudes?
 - Which attitude do you need to be more aware of right now?
 - What might happen if that attitude goes unaddressed?
 - Do you ever feel like you are on a ministry treadmill?
How does it impact your personal wellbeing?

Transition: Unchecked attitudes don't remain frustrations—they begin forming desires, behaviors, and eventually decisions.

Directive Teaching: A Call to the Character of Christ (10 minutes)

Jesus never shepherded from fame, entitlement, defensiveness, exhaustion-driven decisions. He shepherded from humility, purity, compassion, and dependence on the Father.

The antidote to pastoral bad attitudes is not better behavior—it's deeper formation into the character of Christ. That's why this journey doesn't start with techniques. It starts with who we are becoming. A careful reflection and application of the Beatitudes can move us away from unhealthy attitudes and off the treadmill of performance and into the slow work of spiritual formation. "If bad attitudes quietly deform pastors, Jesus shows us the kind of heart that sustains them."

The Beatitudes are Jesus' opening description of the kind of people who belong in His Kingdom. Think of these statements more as character qualities of your identity with Christ than a checklist of expectations for followers. Jesus is describing the inner character of people whose lives are being shaped by Him.

For us as pastors, if we don't continually seek to be changed by God to reflect these characteristics, everything else drifts.

The Beatitudes show us how a pastor...

- relates to God (poor in spirit, hunger for righteousness)
- relates to self (mourning, humility)
- relates to people (mercy, peacemaking)
- endures opposition (persecution)

And they address the very places where pastors most often struggle and fail.

Transition: During our time today, we have considered key Biblical truths related to shepherding like Jesus. We've also considered the wisdom offered in the opening chapters of the book. Now we transition to the real strength of our cohort, applying truth and wisdom to our lives.

Context: Applying Truth and Wisdom to Your Life

4H Reflection: Strengthening One Beatitudes in Your Life (20 minutes)

Directions: Let me teach you a helpful application tool that we will probably use repeatedly together, 4H. It invites us to transition from content knowledge to application and accountability with 4 key questions:

- 1) What did I learn today that I want to apply? **(Head)**
- 2) How do I hope to be changed by what I learned **(Heart)**
- 3) What do I need to do next? **(Hands)**
- 4) Who can I share this with for encouragement and accountability?
(Heels)

Consider preparing a tear sheet with the 4H questions for easy access.

Take a few minutes to answer each of the 4 questions as you reflect on our discussion times from today. Record your responses in your journal and be prepared to share them with one other person before we dismiss.

After each of you have shared your responses, take time to pray for one another.

Next Meeting:

Closing Prayer

SESSION TWO

LEADING FROM DEPENDENCE & BROKENNESS (120 MINS)

Core Question: What happens when I try to pastor from strength instead of spiritual dependence and honest brokenness?

Session 2 Outcomes

1. Pastors will understand why self-sufficiency is spiritually dangerous in ministry.
2. Pastors will be encouraged to embrace spiritual poverty as a pastoral necessity, not a weakness.
3. Pastors will learn how God deepens ministry impact through dependence and honesty.
4. Pastors will have opportunities to see brokenness as a tool God redeems, not something to hide.
5. Pastors will be challenged to identify personal next steps toward humble reliance on God.

Materials Needed:

- Tear Sheets & Markers
- Shepherding Like Jesus Pastor Workbook
- Shepherding Like Jesus: Returning to the Wild Idea that Character Matters in Ministry by Andrew Hébert
- 2 Different color sticky notes (3x3 inch or larger)

Welcome & Updates (15 minutes)

Directions: Encourage participants to share their progress since the last session. Ask them to share what steps they have taken so we can celebrate together. What challenges have they faced that they didn't anticipate? What's something you are learning about yourself as a pastor being transformed by Jesus?

Prayer - What is one area where you are feeling tired, overwhelmed, or burdened? Matthew 11:28, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."
Pray for these needs before continuing.

Transition: Today, we're going to look at why dependence and brokenness are not setbacks in pastoral leadership—but often the very place where Jesus does His most shaping work. During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus begins by naming spiritual poverty and mourning not as deficiencies—but as doorways into the kingdom.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” Matthew 5:3-4 (CSB)

But let's start with an example from Gideon before we get to the New Testament.

TRUTH: Gideon & Paul (25 minutes)

Directions: Let's reflect again on the Scripture passages you studied in preparation for today.

- Ask participants to read Judges 6:14-16 and Judges 7:2-7
- Discussion Questions:
 - How does Gideon initially see himself? How might God view Gideon at this moment?
 - If God reduced your “army,” what would you be most afraid of losing—momentum, reputation, security, or control?
 - Where are you tempted to say, “I know God is with me—but I'd still feel better with more resources”?
 - How does this apply to pastoral leadership today?
- Ask a participant to read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10
- Discussion Questions:
 - Why do pastors often hide their brokenness?
 - Would someone be willing to share what “thorn” have you been asking God to remove that may actually be shaping you?

Directive Teaching - A Missionary's Example (5 minutes)

A modern example can be found in William Carey. When the fire of 1812 destroyed dozens of his precious manuscripts, he didn't blame the devil. He said, "How unsearchable are the ways of God!" And then he accused himself of too much self-congratulation in his labors, and said, "The Lord has smitten us, he had a right to do so, and we deserve his corrections."

He cast himself, poor, helpless, despicable on the kind arms of God. For he knew the promise of Jesus: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for to them belong the merciful and mighty arms of the King of kings.¹

The secret for William Carey was not self-esteem. He was poor in spirit to the very end. Knowing very well his sin and failures, Carey's epitaph reads—"A wretched, poor, and helpless worm, On Thy kind arms I fall."

How might these truths and real-life examples be calling you to see your life and ministry differently?

Pastor's Journal - A Humble Prayer (5 minutes)

Directions- Take a few minutes to record a personal prayer in your journal in response to the truths we have discussed thus far. This is a prayer for you that as God answers it, you will become more like your humble, dependent Savior, in preparation for whatever challenging circumstances that may come your way in the future.

Transition: Let's take a break before we continue to discuss chapters 3 & 4 of *Shepherding Like Jesus* and apply what we are learning to our lives and ministry.

BREAK

1. John Piper sermon, "Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit Who Mourn" <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/blessed-are-the-poor-in-spirit-who-mourn>

Wisdom: Chapters 3 & 4 of *Shepherding Like Jesus*

Brainstorming - What Might That Look Like?

Directions: Form 2 groups to consider one of the two harmful realities mentioned in chapters 3 & 4:

- **Spiritual impoverishment** – functioning without refueling
- **Unacknowledged brokenness** – hiding wounds God intends to heal and use
- Create a tear sheet with the title “What Might (insert your reality) Look Like?”
- Make a list of the potential bad fruit from your assigned reality recording your responses on the tear sheet for all to see.
 - What symptoms might be displayed in a pastor’s life?
 - What negative impact might it have on his family or ministry?
- Allow each group to share their symptoms and potential impacts.
- Discussion Questions:
 - How many of you can identify with at least one of the symptoms listed? (Show of hands)
 - Who notices first when you’re spiritually running on fumes—and who doesn’t notice?
 - But what happens to you personally (physically/emotionally) when you start to wear down under stress?
 - How does spiritual poverty affect the people we lead?
 - The author suggests that unhealed brokenness reappears in other expressions. How have you seen this occur in other people you know?
 - Of all the negative impacts listed, which one concerns you the most personally?

What might
_____ look like?

Symptoms:

Impacts:

Transition: We are all cracked vessels still being used by God to accomplish His purposes in our context. To be a broken pastor fully dependent on God is a good thing even though the world will tell you differently.

H. B. Charles, Jr. in his sermon, "From Rags to Riches," reminds us of the competing realities that vie our attention each day.

"The false value system of the fallen world does not know what it means to be blessed. You are not blessed because the world calls you blessed. You are not blessed because people consider you blessed. You are not blessed because you claim to be blessed. You are blessed if God says you are blessed. No person is blessed by God outside of Christ. We are guilty sinners who only deserve eternal punishment. On the cross, Jesus was cursed by God for our sins so that we might be blessed by God through his righteousness."

To be poor in spirit is to humble yourself. Humility is not thinking negatively about yourself. It is thinking honestly about yourself. It is to confess that at your best, you are a sinner who falls short of the glory of God. With empty hands, you receive, possess, and enjoy the gift of salvation by faith in Christ.

2 Corinthians 8:9 says, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich." ²

Let's conclude our time together by reviewing your responses in the last section of your preparation for today's session, Applying Truth & Wisdom to Your Life.

Context: Applying Truth and Wisdom to Your Life

Directions: You were asked to answer 3 questions to help you apply truth and wisdom to your life. While these questions are very personal, I want to remind you that this is a safe place to share as we all trust God's sanctifying work to continue in our lives. Don't feel like you need to share your responses to all three questions, but I would encourage you to at least share one of your responses that would be most helpful to you today.

- Discussion Questions:
 - Where are you relying on your own strength instead of God's?
 - What broken place have you tried to hide or rush past?
 - What might God want to redeem rather than remove?

2. H. B. Charles sermon, From Rags to Riches, April 9, 2025. <https://hbcharlesjr.com/resource-library/sermon-outlines/from-rags-to-riches-matthew-53/>

Take Away / Leave Behind

Directions: Using the two sticky notes provided for you, answer each of the following two questions:

- What belief, mindset, or practice would you like to leave behind after today? Record your response on one sticky note.
- What truth, habit, or hope would you like to carry forward after today? Record your response on the other sticky note.
- Once participants have finished, let them know that you are going to pray for them and as they leave the room, they are encouraged to place their "Leave behind" note on the tear sheet and take their other note with them and display it in a prominent place as a reminder.

**Leaving it Behind
Me**

Prayer - A Benediction

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:3-9).

SESSION THREE

LEADING WITH HUMILITY & HOLY HUNGER (120 MINS)

Core Question: What is driving my leadership—and what am I truly hungry for in ministry?

Session 3 Outcomes

1. Pastor will understand biblical humility as strength under God's authority.
2. Pastor will confront pride, comparison, and ambition in pastoral leadership.
3. Pastor will rediscover a deep hunger for righteousness, not recognition.
4. Pastor will identify unhealthy motivations that quietly shape ministry decisions.
5. Pastor will take intentional steps toward humility and renewed spiritual desire.

Materials Needed:

- Tear Sheets & Markers
- Shepherding Like Jesus Pastor Workbook
- Shepherding Like Jesus: Returning to the Wild Idea that Character Matters in Ministry

Welcome & Updates (15 minutes)

Directions: Encourage participants to share their progress since the last session. Ask them to share their progress on the "Leave Behind/Take Away" challenge from last session. What can we celebrate together? What ways can we continue to pray for one another so that we can be more faithful to shepherd like Jesus?

Prayer - Pray for these needs before continuing.

Transition: As we continue in the teachings of Jesus from the Beatitudes, we arrive at verses 5 & 6,

"Blessed are the humble, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."

Matthew 5:5-6 (CSB)

Today we're asking deeper heart questions: "What is actually driving my leadership—and what am I feeding my soul with?"

Let's read a few passages of Scripture together and review your responses to build a foundation for our discussion and applications today.

TRUTH: Numbers 12:1-10 and Psalm 42:1-5 (25 minutes)

Directions: Ask participants to read Numbers 12:1-10 and Psalm 42:1-5

- Discussion Questions:
 - How do the events in Numbers 12 parallel those in pastoral leadership?
 - When criticized, what is your instinctive response? Does anyone have a recent story to share?
 - What would it look like to let God handle your defense?
 - What does Psalm 42 reveal about our need to be shepherded during times of discouragement?
 - What practices have you found best allow God to care for you when you need encouragement?

Activity - Prescription for a Discouraged Pastor (10 minutes)

Directions: Another pastor from your town cornered you at a local associational meeting and unloaded 20 minutes of discouraging events that have happened recently. Your brother is hurt, afraid, and filled with doubt and anxiety about his future at the church where he is serving. When he finally pauses for your response, what counsel will you give him that you hope will help shepherd his soul to find peace and hope again?

- Write out a prescription to help shepherd his heart.
What will you recommend he do?
- Avoid the urge to fix the problem or the pastor but allow God to work in his life.
- After a few minutes, I'll invite us to share ideas to create collective wisdom.

What might
_____ look like?

Symptoms:

Impacts:

Transition - (offer encouraging words) Pastors are not immune to discouragement. Some of you may even be battling discouragement today. The question for each of us is how do we train our hearts to respond in healthy ways when discouragement comes? Moses and the psalmist provide good counsel for our souls to trust God with the outcomes of any criticism or discouraging situation. And we can trust God to shepherd our souls as we wait on him to act in any troubling circumstance.

Listen to these words from Jeremy Writebol in his book, [Pastor, Jesus Is Enough: Hope for the Weary, the Burned Out, and the Broken](#),

"If you're looking for one to sympathize with your pain, Jesus is enough. If you're looking for one who's been there and knows the depths of your agony, Jesus is enough. If you wonder where relief and aid and respite will come from, Jesus is enough. If you're looking for someone to be nearer to you than a brother, Jesus is enough. Pastor, in your suffering, abandonment, meager pay, long nights, frustrating board meetings, angry-member emails, frustrating staff departures, misrepresented statements, interrupted family vacations, lost sleep, and all the whirlwinds of trial and tribulation that a local pastor feels, Jesus is enough for you."

Let me offer a prayer for you before we take a break before we discuss the wisdom from chapters 5 & 6 of *Shepherding Like Jesus*. (5 minutes)

Prayer

BREAK

Wisdom: Chapters 5 & 6 of *Shepherding Like Jesus*

Guided Debrief: (25 minutes)

- Discussion Questions:
 - What was your main takeaway from chapter 5, “A Humble Pastor”?
 - Why is humility difficult for pastors?
 - Where does pride tend to surface quietly in your life and leadership?
 - What statement or section challenged you the most from chapter 5, “A Hungry Pastor”?
 - How do you ensure you are craving what will satisfy your spiritual hunger completely when faced with so many empty options in life and ministry?

Transition: Let’s return to our opening verses from Matthew 5:5-6, “Blessed are the humble, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” Let’s take a few minutes to collaborate on ways we can seek to remain humble and hungry when faced with temptations to do the opposite.

Pastor to Pastor: Use the following questions to create a collective list of practical suggestions for growing in humility and dependence on God.

(15 minutes)

- What practical suggestions have you found that help you battle pride?
- What practical suggestions have you found that help you hunger for righteousness?
- What counsel has someone offered you in the past for either?

**Pastor to Pastor:
Humble
and Hungry**

Context: Applying Truth and Wisdom to Your Life (10 minutes)

Let's try our 4H Reflection questions again to guide our application time. As a reminder, here are our 4 questions:

- What did I learn today that I want to apply? **(Head)**
- How do I hope to be changed by what I learned? **(Heart)**
- What do I need to do next? **(Hands)**
- Who can I share this with for encouragement and accountability? **(Heels)**

Directions: This time let's make this visual and provide a greater opportunity for encouragement and accountability.

- Using a tear sheet, record the responses to the first 3 questions for Head, Heart, & Hands.
- You can choose either the topic of humility or hunger or both.
- Be specific with your action step to grow in these shepherd qualities.

Humble and Hungry Shepherd

Head:

Heart:

Hands:

Take a few minutes to answer each of the questions as you reflect on our discussion times from today. When you finish, I'll give the next instructions.

- Pair up and share your responses with a partner for encouragement and accountability.
- Make sure their action step is clear and realistic. If it's not, ask a question to help him clarify it further.
- Make a reminder to check on each other two weeks from today regarding their Head, Heart, and Hands desire to grow in humility or hunger for righteousness.

After each of you have shared your responses, take time to pray for one another.

Next Meeting:

SESSION FOUR

LEADING WITH MERCY & INTEGRITY (120 MINS)

Core Question: What is driving my leadership—and what am I truly hungry for in ministry?

Session 4 Outcomes

1. Pastor will understand why sympathy and mercy are essential for shepherding people well.
2. Pastor will recognize how emotional distance and hardness can quietly develop in ministry.
3. Pastor will see purity of heart as integrity and singleness of devotion, not just moral behavior..
4. Pastor will examine how inner compromise affects outer ministry credibility.
5. Pastor will take intentional steps toward merciful presence and clean-hearted leadership.

Materials Needed:

- Tear Sheets & Markers
- Shepherding Like Jesus Pastor Workbook
- Shepherding Like Jesus: Returning to the Wild Idea that Character Matters in Ministry

Welcome & Updates (5 minutes)

Welcome back! Today we explore two common challenges of pastoral ministry - being merciful among your flock and maintaining your integrity before God and men. We all know pastors that have failed to shepherd with mercy or have fallen into sin and lost their integrity with those they seek to shepherd.

The ability to lead others with mercy and integrity can only be found in the One who has first shown us mercy and gave his sinless life so that we could then be merciful and walk with integrity among them. Pastors, while we know this truth, the reality of our ministries often fails to consistently reflect this truth. But we don't have to allow the gap between ideal and reality remain as we apply the truths of Scripture and ask God to cultivate a heart of mercy in us again.

Becoming a Better Shepherd

Let's start by identifying opportunities for growth as shepherds and then ask the Lord to sanctify us in these areas.

Directions: Prepare a tear sheet listing the following characteristics:

Merciful; Man of integrity; Self-controlled; Respectable; Compassionate; Trustworthy; Hospitable; Gentle; Patient; Generous; Kind; Teachable; Slow to anger; Pure; Faithful; Above-reproach; Dependable

- Which two characteristics would your wife say you need to cultivate more?
- Which two characteristics are obvious opportunities to reflect your Chief Shepherd more?

Prayer: Pray for the pastors asking the Lord to cultivate the shepherd qualities they have identified as needing to be strengthened.

Transition: Today we focus on two shepherd qualities that have probably led to more pastoral dismissals than any other listed on our tear sheet: compassion and purity. Too many men have disqualified themselves as pastor by either not showing mercy to their flock as they should or lacking personal purity and integrity. So, let's begin with reflecting on God's truth together honestly, and entrust our lives to the One who continues to sanctify us by His Word and Spirit.

TRUTH: Psalm 51:1-12; Matthew 9:35-38 (25 minutes)

Directions: Ask a participant to read Matthew 9:35-38

Discussion Questions:

- Why is compassion essential for shepherding?
- What does compassion need to look like among today's congregation?
How should today's pastor reflect Christ's compassion?
- How could hidden sin change your compassion for others?
- If compassion is a lens, what common sins smudge our lenses today?

Read Psalm 51:1-12

- A couple of you summarize David's requests before God in your own words.
- Why is purity essential for pastors?
- How can impurity affect your ministry even if hidden?

Proactive Pastors (15 minutes)

Knowing the number of pastors that have fallen recently and the unrelenting temptations for several of these related sins, how can we as a group of pastors be more proactive and encourage one another to show mercy and walk with integrity in our communities?

Directions: Form 2 groups and devise a strategy for your association to help pastors shepherd well by showing mercy and integrity throughout the tenure of their ministry. What would it entail? Who would it involve? What would be essential to the resource/ministry?

Record your idea/plan on a tear sheet and be ready to share with the cohort at the end of 15 minutes.

After 15 minutes allow groups to share their ideas.

Transition: Great ideas! Let's take a break before we review the wisdom in chapters 7 & 8 of *Shepherding Like Jesus*.

BREAK

Wisdom: Chapters 7 & 8 of *Shepherding Like Jesus*

Guided Debrief: (25 minutes)

Calluses are formed by the repeated friction of an object against skin. These natural defense mechanisms for the body allow it to continue to work but often leave the impacted area with less feeling and tenderness. The same response can happen emotionally, creating calluses on our hearts. Instead of feeling natural emotions like joy and sorrow, we are often left with numbness and insensitivity toward the emotions of others. Or worse, the events can cause us to drift away from our personal pursuit of holiness and lose sight of God's righteousness. In pastoral ministry, our hearts are always vulnerable to drifting and calluses after prolonged exposure to hurt, rejection, or disappointment. We naturally try to protect our own hearts from future hurt, slowly losing our ability to walk obediently before God or show sympathy to those we are called to love and shepherd.

- Discussion Questions:

- What is the main idea for chapter 7? How would you summarize his main points?
- Is there a section you'd like to explore further together?
- What typically hardens a pastor's ability to love and shepherd others over time?
- What one thing has the greatest potential to harden your heart?
- What is the main idea for chapter 8? How would you summarize his main points?
- Is there a section you'd like to explore further together?

Consider this quote from Ray Ortlund,

"The real Jesus attracted failures, exiles, rejects, underachievers, weaklings, compromisers, and losers—the scum of the earth. Every kind of defeated, fed-up sinner found a welcome with him. It was the above-it-all religious elite who hated his guts. But the guilty, the unwashed? He didn't merely tolerate them; he befriended them. He wasn't exhausted by them; they energized him. He knew full well who they were, where they'd been, what they'd done and would do again—and what they would cost him. Yet he was for them, with all his heart. And he is for you."³

3. Ray Ortlund, *The Death of Porn: Men of Integrity Building a World of Nobility* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2021), 56-57.

Transition: Let's return to our opening verses from Matthew 5:7-8, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." Let's use the remainder of our time to apply our truth and wisdom to our lives and trust God will continue to make us into more faithful shepherds as we seek more of Him in our lives.

Context: Pursuing Integrity and Purity Together (20 minutes)

Directions: Let's pair up again or maybe groups of 3 and use the rest of our time to share deeply with one another using the questions you answered in preparation for today's cohort.

- What might Jesus want to clean, soften, or restore in your life?
(Be specific and honest)
- Where do you need greater integrity or purity?
- What are your options to take a step of faith toward reflecting your Shepherd more in this area?
- How can another pastor encourage or help you?

Take a few minutes to hear each other's heart before praying for one another.
Consider continuing your conversation over lunch or coffee as needed.

Next Meeting:

SESSION FIVE

LEADING THROUGH CONFLICT & FAITHFUL ENDURANCE (120 MINS)

Core Question: How do I shepherd faithfully through conflict, opposition, and hardship –and still finish well?

Session 5 Outcomes

1. Pastor will understand peacemaking as an active pastoral calling, not conflict avoidance.
2. Pastor will learn how Jesus-centered reconciliation protects both people and churches.
3. Pastor will prepare for opposition, criticism, and suffering without becoming bitter.
4. Pastor will be encouraged to see endurance as faithful presence over time, not stubborn survival.
5. Pastor will have opportunities to commit to practices that help them finish ministry well, not just last.

Materials Needed:

- Tear Sheets & Markers
- 4x6 Index cards
- Shepherding Like Jesus Pastor Workbook
- Shepherding Like Jesus: Returning to the Wild Idea that Character Matters in Ministry

Welcome (5 minutes)

Last session! Before we begin today's session, let's reread the Beatitudes and pause and celebrate what God has done in our lives as we reflect on the past lessons.

Read Matthew 5:3-12. How have you seen any of these blessings become more of a reality in your life? What updates can you share that will encourage us to give thanks to our ever-faithful God?

Prayer

Transition: Today we focus on a troubling reality that many of us know all too well—conflict. While conflict is inevitable as long as our sin nature remains and people gather in the same place at the same time, how we as shepherds respond to conflict can demonstrate God’s sanctifying work in our lives.

Before we review our focus Scriptures, let’s review other examples of conflict from Scripture.

- What examples do we have of corporate conflict among God’s people?
- What examples do we have of conflict between God’s people and unbelievers?
- When did God’s leaders face personal conflict in Scripture?

As we will conclude our study on the Beatitudes, we are reminded of our call to strive for unity among all the flock with the encouragement of your peers and the faithfulness of our God.

TRUTH: Matthew 5:9-12; 18:15-17 (25 minutes)

Directions: Ask a participant to read Matthew 5:9-12 again from a different translation

Discussion Questions:

- Why does Jesus call peacemakers “sons of God”? How does this title change the way you see your role as shepherd?
- Why is opposition difficult for you as a pastor/shepherd?
- How can these verses (especially verse 12) help you persevere in ministry?

Read Matthew 18:15-17

- What is the goal in following Matthew 18:15-17?
- What does the process of reconciliation require from pastors when others have sinned against us? How should we respond when we have sinned against others?
- What makes personal repentance and reconciliation so hard for pastors?
- What fears arise in us when we have to confront members in sin?
- What happens when conflict is avoided instead of addressed?

Pastor Journal (10 minutes)

Before we continue, I'll give you a few minutes to reflect on our discussion of truth and capture any thoughts in your journal. Is there something God is saying to you that needs your attention? Is there someone you need to reconcile with?

Use this time to record a note or prayer before we proceed further and review the last chapters of *Shepherding Like Jesus*. As you finish, go ahead and quietly take a quick break.

BREAK

Wisdom: Chapters 9 & 10 of *Shepherding Like Jesus*

Top 3 - What causes pastors to quit? (15 minutes)

Directions: Grab a partner and a tear sheet and you have five minutes to list as many answers to the following question as possible before we share our responses.

What makes a pastor resign from his congregation by his choice (not a forced resignation or dismissal, he chooses to leave suddenly)? - 5 minutes

- Let's round robin your responses by each group sharing one response, then the other group(s) sharing one response. If another group mentions your response or something similar, put a check beside your listing. Let's see how many different reasons we can generate together.
- Ask for one response from group 1, then group 2, etc. until all unique responses are mentioned.
- Let's do one more thing with our lists, bring them together side by side, and consider this question: Which of these reasons would we consider our top 3 causes for sudden pastor resignation?

Discussion questions:

- What might be some of the underlying causes of our top 3 reasons for resignation? How do pastors get to this point and walk away? What's the root of their decision?
- Would anyone be willing to share a time when they considered resigning? What circumstances created that desire? What emotions were you feeling?

Note: As facilitator, this may be an opportunity to share a personal story.

Transition: Pastors usually don't quit because of one big moment. They wear down through unresolved conflict and unprocessed suffering. For pastors to stay faithful until the end of their ministry, reconciliation must be practiced as often as conflict occurs.

Guided Debrief (25 minutes)

Discussion Questions:

- What encouraged you the most from chapter 9? What was one takeaway you underlined or highlighted?
- What wisdom do you have for this group to help bring healing to a hurting congregation?
- What encouraged you the most from chapter 10? What was one takeaway you underlined or highlighted?
- How do you normally respond to criticism? How do you handle the "people are saying" moments that arise in ministry - those times when someone tells you something negative without naming the individuals?
- How does avoidance actually make things worse for the people involved?
- How can reconciliation strengthen a church long-term?

Transition: Our author, Andrew Hébert, shares these words in a recent blog for Southeastern Theological Seminary,

Pastors aren't perfect and don't have it all together. God forbid that we pretend otherwise. We need the posture of the publican who said, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner," rather than the Pharisee who self-righteously and self-deceptively said, "God, I thank you that I'm not like other people" (Luke 18:10-13). There is comfort available for mourners, but there is no comfort without first mourning.

As pastors, we are pretty good about leading the church in vision, in strategy, in exciting new endeavors, but more important than any of those things is that we lead in brokenness over our sin. We should be the first to recognize our sin, the first to confess, and the first to repent. We cannot properly grieve over anyone else's sin until we have first grieved over our own.⁴

Let's close our final session taking time to apply these truths and wisdom to our lives.

4. Andrew Hébert, Bold or Broken. <https://www.pastorscenter.org/blog/bold-or-broken/>

Context: Encouraging one another to finish well (20 minutes)

Directions: Let's use the rest of our time to share our responses from the questions you answered in preparation for today's cohort. Three closing questions that I'd encourage you to answer at least one for your good and the benefit of the group.

- What threatens your pastoral endurance today?
- Is there an opposition or discouragement that weighs you down? What is it?
- What helps you to remain faithful when ministry is hard?

Blessed to be a blessing

Each of the Beatitudes we studied together began with the word "blessed," so let's end our time together by exercising our pastoral privilege to bless one another before we go.

- Take a minute to consider the person on your right. Recall the things he has shared during cohort - his struggles, his hopes, his wisdom, his faithfulness. Using the index card provided, take a minute to record a blessing for him similar to Paul's prayer for the Romans,

"May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 15:5).

Once we have all finished, we will read our blessings and give them to our brothers.

Final Word

- What final encouragement can you offer?
- Is there another cohort starting soon? If so, share the details and invite pastors to continue and invite others.
- Any plans to celebrate together with lunch?
- Pray a blessing for the pastors before you dismiss.

CONTACT US



shepherdingteam@scbaptist.org



(803) 227-6051



190 Stoneridge Drive
Columbia, SC, 29210