

# SHEPHERD LEADERSHIP

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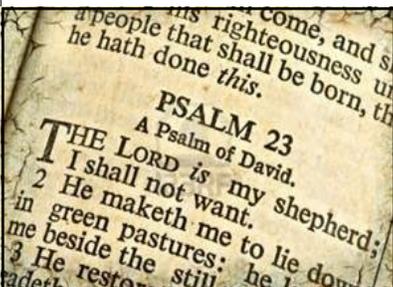
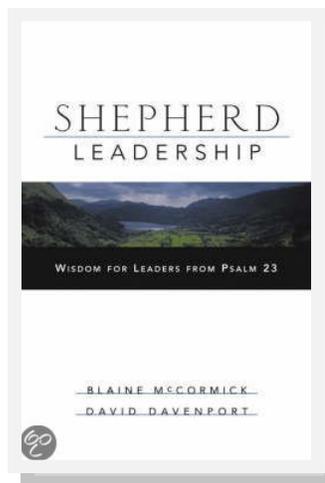
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## OVERVIEW

In *Shepherd Leadership*, (McCormick and Davenport, 2003), McCormick and Davenport connect modern-day leadership models in business, education, and public office to the image and notion of the leader as a shepherd of his followers.

In particular, the authors affix common leadership theories, practices and concrete examples to the renowned Psalm 23. McCormick and

Davenport (2003) break apart lines from the scripture to serve as metaphors for the type of whole person leadership required by today's leaders. Psalm 23 serves as a metaphor not only for the wisdom, care, and resilience of a traditional shepherd, but also for the vision and mentality of those who lead with conviction, inspiration, and effectiveness in today's society.



## MEET THE AUTHORS

### Blaine McCormick

Blaine McCormick is an award-winning professor at the Hankamer School of Business at Baylor University. He has appeared on CNN and ABC World News Tonight with Peter Jennings.



### David Davenport

David Davenport is the former president of Pepperdine University and is currently a distinguished professor of public policy and law at Pepperdine University. He writes a column for Scripps Howard News Service, and his writings have appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle, Los Angeles Times, USA Today, and Christian Science Monitor.



## THE SHEPHERD AS LEADER

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD.

Traditionally speaking, shepherds have been regarded as kind and calm individuals. According to McCormick and Davenport (2003), the image of a shepherd offers the best fit for the life of an effective modern-day leader, as they possess this same gentleness, but are also both tough and resilient.



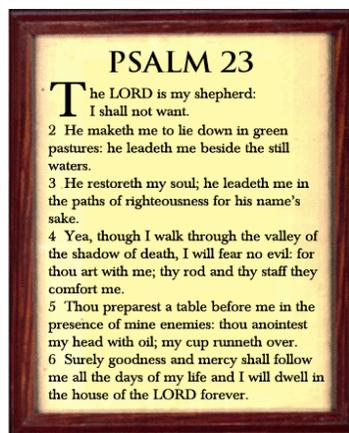
to think and plan ahead, not unlike that of a good travel guide who empowers you to see and learn more than would be possible on your own (p. 6). Shepherd leaders are able to envision the next destination and know the best way to arrive at it. They possess mental agility, meaning that they are able to move from deep contemplation to quick decisiveness if called upon to do so.

*“Shepherd leadership... a matter of **head** and **hand** and **heart**” (p. 5).*

Despite many similarities, distinctions are made between newer

explanations of servant leadership that limits or downplays the role of hierarchy and status differences in organizations, while shepherd leadership places the leader firmly at the front of his or her followers to act as a role model. Furthermore, leaders become shepherds when they recognize and value that their actions and the decisions they make can improve the quality of their followers' lives.

Shepherd leaders provide an environment of contentment and abundance for their followers. They are out among them, assessing their needs, managing, conflict, and removing irritants or obstacles for them. They don't send memos or emails from the corner of the office, but rather get into the field or workplace to model and guide. The hallmark of a shepherd leader is the ability and will to view life from their follower's perspective (p.7).



Shepherd leadership requires a fully-integrated or whole-person leadership. It is a way of thinking, including having the ability

## SHEPHERDS MEET NEEDS

I SHALL NOT WANT.

HE MAKETH ME LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES;  
HE LEADETH ME BESIDE THE STILL WATERS.

*What might it feel like to be so contented that you could say, “I do not want?”*

Shepherd leaders understand the imperativeness of meeting the needs of their followers in order to increase organizational value. This involves engaging not only their time and minds in their work, but also their hearts (p. 13).



A shepherd leader is not a driving, pushing leader, but leads with more patience, insight, persistence, diligence, awareness, and care (pg. 17). They are drawn to others and are committed to learning how they think and feel, by noticing changes in behavior and responding appropriately.

*What might it take professionally for you to get there?*

Shepherd leaders recognize the differences between individual and organizational needs and work tirelessly to discover, uncover, and meet them. Effective leadership also involves genuine and proactive listening, and shepherd leadership is no different. Being alert to the needs of one's followers is a necessary skill for shepherd leaders. Having them communicate about

their successes, failures, challenges, and problems is a powerful way to become aware of their needs. The shepherd leader listens with a purpose to truly understand rather than to be understood themselves (p. 15).

Shepherd leaders understand that when you have followers who you share trust and confidence with, the potential for both individual and organizational value increases substantially.

## SHEPHERDS LEAD IMMORTALS

HE RESTORETH MY SOUL.

Shepherd leadership involves learning to view oneself and others through the lens of an immortal soul (p. 22). Shepherd leaders are careful to avoid compartmentalizing material and spiritual matters. They strive to maintain a people focus in light of the rigors and tasks of those found in the world of business and education.

Shepherd leaders don't need to dismantle or discredit bureaucracy, but recognize that it is humans that populate one. To further illustrate, a bureaucracy sends a death certificate and prints an obitu-

ary, while a shepherd leader acknowledges the loss and finds a way to help (p. 24).

Part of viewing their workplace with both the material and spiritual sides of life is recognizing that each follower brings something unique and valuable to the herd. The shepherd leader is aware and works to get the right gifts into the right place so that they are best used by the community (p.26). Similarly, leaders watch out for moments of failure in their followers and work hard to find ways to restore the souls, hopes, and confidence of

those who fail. They create second chances for their followers to shine and boldly live out principles of compassion and mercy.



## SHEPHERDS LEAD ON RIGHT PATHS

HE LEADETH ME IN THE PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE

Like sheep, people prefer to be led from the front rather than driven or pushed from behind. Shepherds lead with their voice. In other words, one of the primary tools for leading a large flock is communication, both oral and written. Shepherd leaders make certain that there are regular opportunities for people to hear their voice. They also make efforts to spend time in operational areas and take unplanned walks around their work area each week, for they recognize that interacting with the flock on their own terms is a powerful form of leadership.



Shepherd leaders remember that communication is not just about the content, but also about the tone and voice used. They are typically out in front calling to their followers, and they maximize their impact by connecting first with those in the organization or schools that are their lead sheep or most influential people. By building connections and commitment with the lead people, they gain valuable and powerful influence with the rest.

Shepherd leaders help their followers make good choices by understanding and framing the options before them. Furthermore, leaders are more effective when they involve their people in some meaningful way in finding the right paths.

A shepherd leader gently but clearly sets boundaries and outlines the path. When the flock knows and trusts the leader's voice, they will follow in right paths. Additionally, leaders must themselves know and honor boundaries and follow an appropriate course of action.

It is difficult work to climb out in front in order to gain an understanding of the direction that must be taken. It takes a second gathering of information, keen intellect to sort through the options, and courage to make the best, often difficult choice. It is additionally difficult to communicate the message to the flock. It is almost never sufficient for a leader to simply announce the path to everyone at one moment, but rather to share the correct path over and over.

*“Even in times of change and chaos, leadership is still about finding the right paths to be followed” (p.32).*



## SHEPHERDS KNOW THE VALLEY

*YEA, THOUGH I WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH...*

Shepherd leaders know the valley is a place of testing, solitude, and loneliness that forces us to examine our values and priorities. Therefore, thinking, feeling, reflecting, journaling, and praying are all tools appropriate to the valley. A shepherd leader, difficult as it may be, develops depth and character in the valley, and gains the ability to lead others out of it.

Some leaders will inherit circumstances and lead almost entirely through the valleys. Nearly all leaders will have to do so at some point in their careers. It becomes paramount, then, to adopt a 5-pronged approach to surviving the valley:



- 1) **Cultivate insight and awareness.**
  - It is critical for a leader to recognize and name the valley.
- 2) **Be candid.**
  - It is generally better for leaders to admit problems rather than to ignore or hide them.
- 3) **Engage people.**
  - In times of difficulty, it is important for leaders to be visible with people.
- 4) **Find a way to share optimism and hope.**
  - Be honest and realistic.
- 5) **Roll up your sleeves and model a proactive approach.**
  - Sometimes you may have to work your way out of the valley.

Shepherd leaders are aware that important growth can occur in the valley. With good leadership, people and organizations should emerge from the valley stronger than when they entered.



*What have been some of your **professional** valley experiences?*

*What have you **learned** from them?*

*Are there situations in your life in which you are a **leader** and others in which you follow?*



## SHEPHERDS COME ALONGSIDE

*I WILL FEAR NO EVIL; FOR THOU ART WITH ME.*

Effective leadership and true shepherding cannot be done remotely. True shepherd leaders must be present and must be prepared to shift back and forth between the big-picture and individual level. They act as both visible leader and vulnerable follower. A shepherd leader understands that they may need to relinquish the right to lead in certain situations because someone else is better equipped or better qualified to do so.

Shepherd leaders are flexible and readily embrace other types of thinking. They are comfortable with altering their role for the common good and are able to adjust to it quickly and smoothly.

Shepherd leaders work alongside and notice the changing needs of their followers. That is, they are attentive to the signs of trouble and



take initiative to deal with them. They are present to provide gentle, genuine assistance. Shepherd leaders act perceptively to solve problems by removing irritants, providing resources, or re-assigning work.

Shepherds bring a sense of vigilance, guidance, and discipline to their role. They are called to be courageous in their actions and judgement and allow time for care-

ful thought and reflection. Shepherd leaders use moral language to unveil threats to their followers and alert them to the danger. Shepherds use mental courage to line up their values and priorities in advance of a threatening situation and will not compromise them.

# SHEPHERDS USE THE RIGHT TOOLS

THY ROD AND THY STAFF, THEY COMFORT ME.

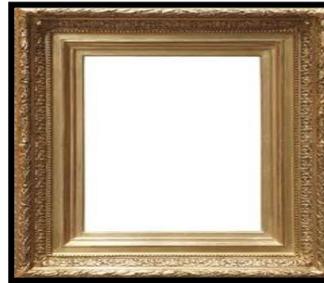
Shepherd leaders know their individual strengths. They do not simply imitate someone else’s leadership style or skills, but find their own skills and tools and work from those. Furthermore, they recognize that different tools might be needed from time to time in order to guide, discipline, or protect their followers.

Shepherds establish their **“leadership compass”** or set a clear statement of the values and overall direction of the organization.



The shepherd leader also lays out the context or **“frame”** for which the primary stakeholders take ownership, make decisions, and move the organ-

ization forward. That is, they work to empower their followers. Shepherd leaders understand that building the frame and encouraging others to step up to their responsibilities requires patience, faith, and wisdom.



*“Shepherd leadership is more about helping people **understand** the questions than giving out a lot of answers” (p.68).*

# SHEPHERDS TRANSFORM CONFLICT

THOU PREPAREST A TABLE BEFORE ME IN THE PRESENCE OF MINE ENEMIES.

Shepherd leaders exert their legitimate authority to keep destructive self-promoting behaviors in check. They understand that conflict cannot always be avoided, but is transformed into a process that ultimately benefits their followers. They take the time to model, teach, and create an environment where a healthy disagreement can occur. They also understand the differences between healthy intellectual conflict, which they allow to flourish, and dysfunctional interpersonal conflict, which they know to keep in check. Shepherd leaders understand the impact of making mistakes and create space for reconciliation. They abide by the following restorative process:

## A Shepherd Leader’s Guide to Transforming Conflict

<b>Set the Table</b>	<i>Invite those in conflict to come to the table for peacemaking.</i>
<b>Make Room for 2 or More Perspectives</b>	<i>Invite parties involved to share their interests and perspectives.</i>
<b>Uncover Good Intentions and Negative Impacts</b>	<i>Honor good intentions, but acknowledge the hurtful impact each party’s actions had on the other.</i>
<b>Invite an Apology and Other Healing Words</b>	<i>Encourage each party to express goodwill for the future of the relationship.</i>

The modern shepherd leader is alert to the dangers of escalation and seeks to create a space where reconciliation and healthy conflict can occur.



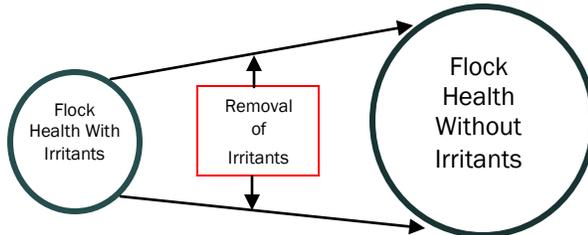
What might be the most common irritants found in your workplace?

What negative self-images might your followers have of themselves?

# SHEPHERDS REMOVE IRRITANTS

THOU ANNOINTEST MY HEAD WITH OIL.

Shepherds understand that by removing irritants from their flock or followers, the size and health of the flock increases dramatically.



**Low Self-Efficacy**—the shepherd leader comes alongside to promote confidence with encouragement, patient teaching, and support.

**Irritating Behaviors** (negativity, tantrums, attacks, whining, sniping)— the shepherd leader comes alongside the flock to confront the behaviors in an attempt to extinguish them.



Shepherd leaders are also called upon to commission their followers to a new personal vision of themselves. That is, they help them see themselves in a new light with a different self-image. At times, the shepherd leader anoints in the medical sense to remove irritants. At other times, the shepherd leader anoints in the pastoral sense to commission followers.

In the field, sheep rarely run to the shepherd when there is trouble. Instead, it is more often the shepherd who must seek out the sheep and check for problems.

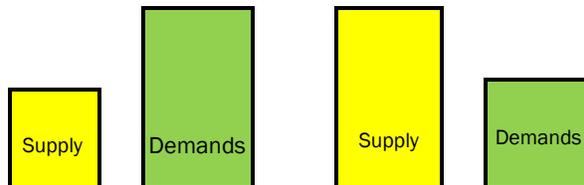
### Common Irritants

**Uncertainty**—the shepherd leader must come alongside to clarify roles, directions, expectations, and so on.

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# SHEPHERDS CREATE SUPPLY

MY CUP RUNNETH OVER.



**Problem:** Demands exceed supply.  
**Solution:** Reduce demands!

**Principle:** Supply-side living.  
**Solution:** Increase supply!

with the people in their lives who supply them.

To be able to care for the sheep, the shepherd must learn to care for himself. Since followers do not like their leaders to seem tired, edgy, or sick, the care of the shepherd becomes a matter of importance for the entire flock. Leaders must accept that they too are assets worth caring for and keeping well supplied. Shepherd leaders understand that human beings work efficiently only when supply integrates with demand, when soul integrates with body, when the cup is fully even to overflowing.

A shepherd leader's cup reflects a mentality of abundance, in which supply not only meets, but happily exceeds the demands of life. Balancing your life is as much about increasing the supply, filling the cup, as it is about managing the demands.

All great leaders must, at some point, figure out their source of supply and when and where to get them. The most important resource in almost every field is highly trained, motivated, effective people. That must include people whose lives are well supplied, whose cups are filled to the brim, ready to go. Shepherd leaders do not fail to spend time



## SHEPHERDS SHARE A POSITIVE VISION

*SURELY GOODNESS AND MERCY SHALL FOLLOW ME  
ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE.*

Shepherds are out in front leading the flock, and the vision of the future they communicate is central to that leadership. People need a hopeful vision about the future of the organization and their role in it. Shepherd leaders know that there will be rough terrain, that green pastures and still waters may be scarce, that disease may strike the flock. Still, they find a way to frame a positive yet realistic vision of the future. Shepherd leaders learn to reframe difficult developments into a part of the more positive whole. There are several questions they might consider when facing challenges:

- *How important will this be one week, one month, or one year from now?*
- *Is there a silver lining in this cloud?*
- *In what way will this make me or the organization stronger?*
- *How might I learn from this experience?*
- *Might this draw our team together more closely?*
- *Will there at least be a good story from this down the road?*

Shepherd leaders find a framework, a worldview for the flock based on goodness and mercy. In doing so, they set the tone and culture for how people will live and act within the family, the business, the classroom, or wherever the leadership is provided.

*People want to follow a leader with a **clear** and **positive** vision about the future” (p.101).*

## SHEPHERDS CULTIVATE LOYALTY

*AND I SHALL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOR EVER.*

Shepherd leaders understand and expect that at some point, some of their followers may leave their company. Shepherd leadership creates a place where the least mobile workers can be proud and to which they can be loyal. Shepherd leaders show a special concern for their followers with the fewest options.

*Where would you place yourself on the spectrum of **pessimist**—**realist**—**optimist**?*

*Where would your flock place you?*



*What do you do as a follower to demonstrate your **loyalty** to your leader?*

## CRITIQUE

*Shepherd Leadership* (McCormick and Davenport, 2013), provides the reader with sound insight into the common challenges experienced by those in today's leadership positions. Psalm 23 serves as a valuable inspiration for the theory, philosophies, and general mindset required by successful leaders in a variety of fields.

In their approach, McCormick and Davenport illustrate how effectively the notion of shepherd leadership is applied to various disciplines, including the field of education. In addition to initially drawing a distinction between shepherd and servant leadership, throughout the book they compile a series of real-life scenarios that exemplify the skills and vision associated with their particular brand of leadership. Generally speaking, shepherd leadership refers to a style of leadership involving a certain degree of care, positivity, attentiveness, courage, and nobility.



The book itself is written in a style and fashion that allows for quick comprehension and meaningful reflection. Following each chapter, McCormack and Davenport not only encourage the reader to reflect upon their own leadership practices, but also challenge one to begin acting upon their newly acquired approach.

A simple criticism of *Shepherd Leadership* is that most chapters within the book fail to contain any sort of graphic representation of the theory and philosophies discussed. Though the

authors frequently describe the actions or role of a real-life shepherd, few actual diagrams exist to help build understanding. Also, though examples of shepherd leadership are provided in each chapter, most of them tend to be relatively extreme or unconventional examples involving high-ranking leaders and CEO's of companies. I would have found it slightly more valuable to have had targeted discussion and practical examples found in the common workplace. It would have fostered a stronger connection to those examples that were shared.

All in all, *Shepherd Leadership* finds the mark in providing a reflective, inspiring metaphor for general leadership practice. By calling forth Psalm 23 as a backdrop for their leadership theories, McCormick and Davenport create a leadership philosophy and vision abundant with the care, compassion, and confidence that is vital to today's effective leaders.

