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Before We Get Started ...

Here is a list of additional Practical Shepherding resources you will need before you begin this training:

BOOKS

-  A Bible
-  *The Pastor's Ministry: Biblical priorities for faithful shepherds* by Brian Croft (Zondervan, 2015)
-  *Conduct Gospel-Centered Funerals: Applying the gospel at the unique challenges of death* by Brian Croft and Phil Newton (revised edition: Zondervan, 2014)
-  *Oversee God's People: Shepherding the flock through administration and delegation* by Brian Croft and Bryce Butler (Zondervan, 2015)
-  *Gather God's People: Understand, plan, and lead worship in your local church* by Brian Croft and Jason Adkins (Zondervan, 2015)
-  *The Pastor's Soul: The call and care of an undershepherd* by Brian Croft and Jim Savastio (Evangelical Press, 2018)
-  *The Pastor's Family: Shepherding your family through the challenges of pastoral ministry* by Brian and Cara Croft (Zondervan, 2013)
-  *Collateral Damage: My journey to healing from my pastor and father's failure* by James B. Carroll (Christian Focus Publications, 2017)
-  *Biblical Church Revitalization: Solutions for dying and divided churches* by Brian Croft (Christian Focus Publications, 2016)
-  *Facing Snarls and Scowls: Preaching through hostility, apathy, and adversity in church revitalization* by Brian Croft and James B. Carroll (Christian Focus Publications, 2019)
-  *Mea Culpa: Learning from mistakes in the ministry* by Kyle McClellan (Christian Focus Publications, 2015)

ARTICLES

- Each article assigned will be linked to the Practical Shepherding website (practicalshepherding.com) in that week's assignment

PODCASTS

- 🎧 Each podcast episode assigned will be linked to the Practical Shepherding website (practicalshepherding.com) in that week's assignment

VIDEOS

- ▶ All videos can be found at:
practicalshepherding.com/practicallytrained



Introduction

The ball more often drops because of miscommunication and ignorance than malice and incompetence. In families and organizations alike, problems stem from wrong assumptions and misplaced expectations. Thankfully, while these issues happen all the time, they don't generally produce lasting consequences. Tension can fill a home when a husband and wife realize a task wasn't completed because both thought the other was going to do it. Small details are overlooked in the workplace because coworkers assumed someone else was looking after them. A church's ministry lapses because clear communication between the pastor and lay-leaders was lost in translation. Again, these blunders and the strain they create most often fade quickly, but not always. This idea explains a glaring omission in the evangelical church today.

Many pastors are ill-equipped. The fault lies not in a lack of divine calling or enabling. It's not because they're lazy and refuse to put their hand to the plow. Even more, the blame does not fall solely and squarely to churches or seminaries. Instead, it can be found primarily in the relationships between them. Once again, the problem is owing more to miscommunication and ignorance than malice and incompetence. The new or aspiring pastor seeks training wherever he can find it, but he doesn't know what he doesn't know. Meanwhile, the church assumes the seminary is preparing the man for ministry while the seminary is assuming the same about the church. These faulty assumptions create a gap that leaves pastors and churches vulnerable as they live and work together. The eventual result is harm in the form of hurting and burned-out pastors and of wounded and struggling congregations.

This book aims to correct this flaw, but we're not the first to see the resulting problems from poorly trained pastors. In fact, there

are many efforts to explain this reality and to create solutions. The problem is many of these modern-day solutions to salvage such losses are aggravating instead of solving them. Here are a few of the more common unhelpful strategies.

First, some advocate for correcting the problem with pragmatism. This philosophy defines truth, and therefore determines the course, by observing what works. Operating by these commitments, a church or pastor finds an example of success and simply tries to emulate it. To borrow from the ancient expression, they try to mimic fishing techniques and tricks rather than truly learning to fish for themselves. To be clear, we're not eliminating the role of pragmatic thinking. We recognize that we honor God by striving for more efficient and effective methods to fulfill our work. But often we confuse pragmatism and practical thinking. So rather than merely pursuing resourcefulness, we chase a different version of success.

For the church, the goal becomes visible "success" defined by increasing attendance rather than more effective discipleship and soul care. God-glorifying transformation through submission to Christ, which results from digesting biblical truth, is replaced by numerical growth as the driving force and foundation of pastoral ministry. As you can imagine, this often creates a church built upon entertainment, consumerism, flashy programs, and shallow spiritual growth. This solution may gain new attendees and members, but it will not cultivate church health. Ultimately, God's sheep lack the tender and intentional care of an under-shepherd.

Second, some turn to developing and then depending on the leader's gifts. Of course, leadership is a necessary function in any church, but this strategy distorts the need for healthy, balanced leadership by extending it to an unhelpful level. Focusing on the leader himself, this solution can cultivate his growth in winsomeness, cleverness, and organizational aptitude at the expense of his character development and dependence on God's word. The result is most often a CEO-type,

top-down structure that relies too heavily on a central figure and virtually eliminates the paradigm for shared ministry given in the Scriptures.

As you can see, this strategy stems from pragmatism and produces the same long-term problems. Even for the extremely gifted pastors, the weight of ministry and the pressure to carry it alone creates a burden that buries them emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Even worse, God's sheep suffer because they lack the tender care and Godward ministry of an under-shepherd.

Lastly, churches that avoid the pull of pragmatism succumb to an over-reliance on theological education. While theological robustness in pastoral ministry is critical, not everyone will attend seminary or Bible college. As in any field, we need basic equipping in a number of areas and extensive instruction in a number of others. Studying the Bible's original languages—Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek—improves our knowledge and understanding of our most basic ministry tool. Systematic theology helps us grasp the Scripture's collective revelation about God that gives balance and depth to our pastoral ministry. Church history adds perspective that makes us wiser as we apply the Bible's directives to the present day. Hermeneutics makes us better Bible teachers. Ecclesiology provides a clearer understanding of the organizational aspects of the organism of the church. The list could go on, but the point is clear: seminary education is of great value.

However, the flaw for many in this regard is an assumption that theological knowledge is sufficient for the trench work of local church ministry. Many aspiring pastors and congregations believe a Master of Divinity degree will be sufficient to prepare them for the unique challenges, pressures, and demands of pastoral ministry. What's missing is the essential yet often overlooked practical ministry training that can only be learned in a local church under the mentorship of a pastor. This practical training in "under-shepherding" is vital to care well for God's sheep.

The burden to care for churches by properly training pastors is the heartbeat of Practical Shepherding. And this field guide is the culmination of more than a decade of writing and training.

WHY A 52-WEEK FIELD GUIDE?

Practical Shepherding has published a library of resources for over ten years to create a holistic approach to training pastors in the often overlooked, yet essential, practicalities of pastoral ministry. This book draws from and builds upon those books, podcasts, and articles to provide a thorough, 52-week training program for pastors and aspiring pastors. Any pastor can further his training by using this book for personal study or can train others by walking a group of leaders, pastoral interns, or elders-in-training through an equipping program in their local church context.

Over the years, I (Brian) have heard from pastors who want to start their own one-year internship or leadership training but lack the structure and material to do it. This one book—when used in conjunction with the other Practical Shepherding resources—provides a great starting point to all they need to begin this training. This field guide draws on the good and bad experiences from decades of pastoral ministry, builds on a mountain of practical ministry resources already published, and includes a conversational component through corresponding video sessions to deliver a one-stop resource for in-the-field training.

HOW DO I USE THIS 52-WEEK FIELD GUIDE?

This book has a simple, straightforward layout that will lead you through each week of this one-year training. Here are the five steps to guide you through each week's study.

STEP 1

Read the Bible passage(s) assigned and consider its relevance to that week's topic. Always ask the question, "What does this passage teach me about the New Testament design of a pastor's ministry?" This assigned passage can also be used as a discussion piece for a group.

STEP 2

Read the assigned book chapter(s) or article(s) or podcast(s) in the corresponding Practical Shepherding resource. Carefully digest these pages and recorded discussions, writing notes to help when returning to them later and for participating in group discussions.

STEP 3

Read the short teaching and practical guide section on the given topic provided for you in this book. These brief sections highlight some pitfalls pastors are prone to fall into in a particular aspect of ministry and provide a corresponding call to action through practical instruction. This additional information is meant to build on the assignments in the first two steps and act as a bridge to application. Completing these assignments before a group discussion will be crucial to experiencing the full impact of this training course.

STEP 4

Watch the authors discuss the given topic on a four to five-minute video clip that can be accessed through the link provided in the book. This important video component brings all the material together to form a satisfying conclusion.

STEP 5

Each week, use the space provided in this book to answer the reflection question and write out a closing prayer for yourself around this particular aspect of pastoral ministry. Ask God to help you grow in areas of weakness and gaps in your gifting that have been revealed. We own our weaknesses and failings more deeply when we write them out so this final step will be critical for making the progress intended by this resource. Our goal is not merely intellectual growth, but practical growth in pastoral ministry. These answers will also be a helpful tool for leading and participating in the group discussions each week.

This five-step approach is like any other training program in that you will get out of this what you put into it. In other words, even if you do some steps and skip others, you will learn valuable practical tools. However, each step is intentionally placed in the process. Trust that process and give yourself to it for maximum benefit.

One final word before you begin. Commit to finish the full 52 weeks. Just as these five steps are designed to be done in order and build upon the other, this field guide is designed for completion as part of a year-long training course. We realize pastors and pastoral trainees are busy. It'll be challenging to complete the assignments some weeks and you'll be tempted to quit at points along the journey. Some will go at this training alone and will find it easy to add this book to one of the many that you've started, but never finished.

So, commit yourself now before God to complete it. Even if it takes longer than a year, persevere to the end. Even if you don't have a group walking with you, find someone who will hold you accountable to finish what you're starting. We have trained hundreds of pastors through this material prior to putting it in this final form. It has proven to fill in the gaping hole of practical training necessary for pastoral ministry in the trenches. We are confident if you stay focused on completing this one-year training guide, you will be glad you did. Let's get to it.

Warm regards,

Brian and James




THE PASTOR'S MINISTRY



WEEK


1

What Is Pastoral Ministry?

 *1 Peter 5:1-4 and
Hebrews 13:17*

ASSIGNMENTS

READ

 *The Pastor's Ministry
(pages 11-18)*

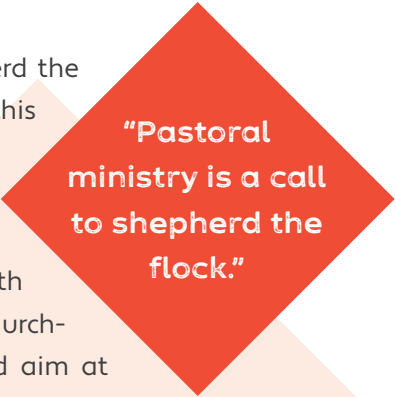
“ MAIN IDEA

Pastors must embrace their calling to shepherd the flock of God entrusted to them on behalf of the Chief Shepherd, knowing we will give an account to Jesus for each of them.

”

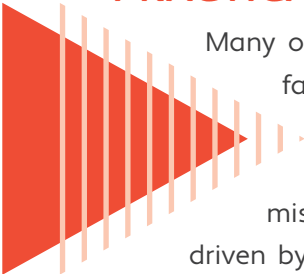
PASTORAL PITFALLS

Pastoral ministry is a call to shepherd the flock. And yet, pastors lose sight of this biblical calling for many reasons. Some get overwhelmed with the burdens of their congregation and choose not to carry those burdens with them. Others get stirred by the church-growth pressures of our culture and aim at increasing the number of members rather than caring for the members already present. Because they have been taught that pastoral ministry is mostly about preaching and the public ministry, some pastors neglect the call to shepherd as they pursue preaching as the sole focus of their ministry. While preaching is certainly a major part of shepherding the flock, it is not the only part. Lastly, a lack of love for God's people leads some pastors to neglect the call to shepherd. We're not aware of any measurable statistics to prove it, but our experience has revealed a surprising number of men who seek a calling in pastoral ministry without a general love for people and a specific love for his flock.



**"Pastoral
ministry is a call
to shepherd the
flock."**

PRACTICAL ACTION



Many of the practical steps to shepherd the flock faithfully will be covered in this book. The first action item is to grasp a pastor's true, biblical calling. There are many misconceptions about pastoral ministry driven by entertainment, pragmatism, and business methodology. Therefore, we must first embrace the call of a pastor as a call to shepherd. Our goal is not to be a famous preacher or to grow a big church, but to lead, feed, protect, and care for the

flock God has given us. Hopefully, that work leads to numeric and spiritual growth. But we must know from the outset that this call to shepherd is messy work. Faithful shepherds labor with and for the sheep, involving themselves in their messy lives as they care for souls entrusted to them. It is not glamorous work; shepherds who persevere in this hard and lonely work—that we call “trench work”—will end up smelling like their sheep. All is not gloom and sorrow, however; this work is joyful and fulfilling when the Chief Shepherd has called you to it.

A PERSONAL NOTE WITH BRIAN AND JAMES

➤ practicalshepherding.com/practicallytrained

▶ click on video: week 1

VIDEO
LINK

Week 1

REFLECTION QUESTION

What was your understanding of the call to pastoral ministry as you began this book?



How have you been challenged to pray for your own ministry and personal growth as you see this call to shepherd the flock?


NOTES

WEEK


2

Guard the Truth

ASSIGNMENTS

 2 Timothy 1:13 - 2:2

READ

 *The Pastor's Ministry*
(pages 21-36)

“ MAIN IDEA

Pastors must guard the truth, realizing it has been entrusted to us, and then entrust that same truth to other faithful men for the next generation.

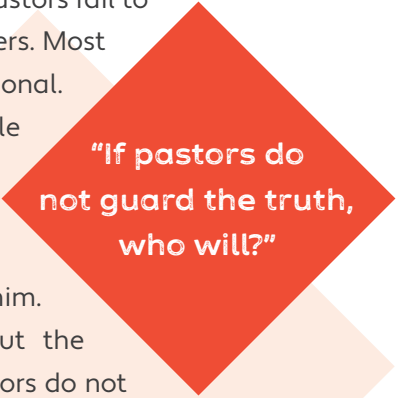
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PASTORAL PITFALLS

There are several common reasons pastors fail to guard the truth and entrust it to others. Most often, this negligence is unintentional.

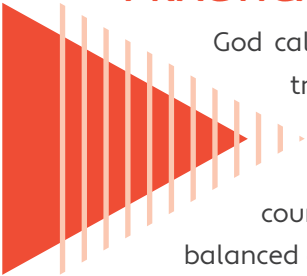
First, pastors forget this is our sole responsibility. Paul entrusted this treasure to Timothy, his young pastoral protégé, to then pass along to the next generation after him.

That line has continued throughout the generations all the way to us. If pastors do not guard the truth, who will? Second, pastors lose confidence in the truth to build the church and rely on other methods instead. We lose sight of the truth that God's word and the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ bring real, spiritual life to a church and are his instruments to sustain that life. In these situations, pastors are relying—sometimes unwittingly—on something else to build Christ's church. Lastly, pastors fail to guard the truth because they fail to raise up other faithful men to be pastors and entrust this truth to them for the next generation.



"If pastors do not guard the truth, who will?"

PRACTICAL ACTION



God calls us to guard the truth for if we lose the truth, we have nothing. Here are a few practical ways we can guard the truth as we shepherd the flock. Preach the whole counsel of God, or in other words, provide a balanced diet of the Old and New Testament sermons in your ministry. Make sure the gospel is clear in your sermons.

Be simple and direct as you make known the life, death, resurrection, and return of Jesus. Be intentional that the truth of God's word drives