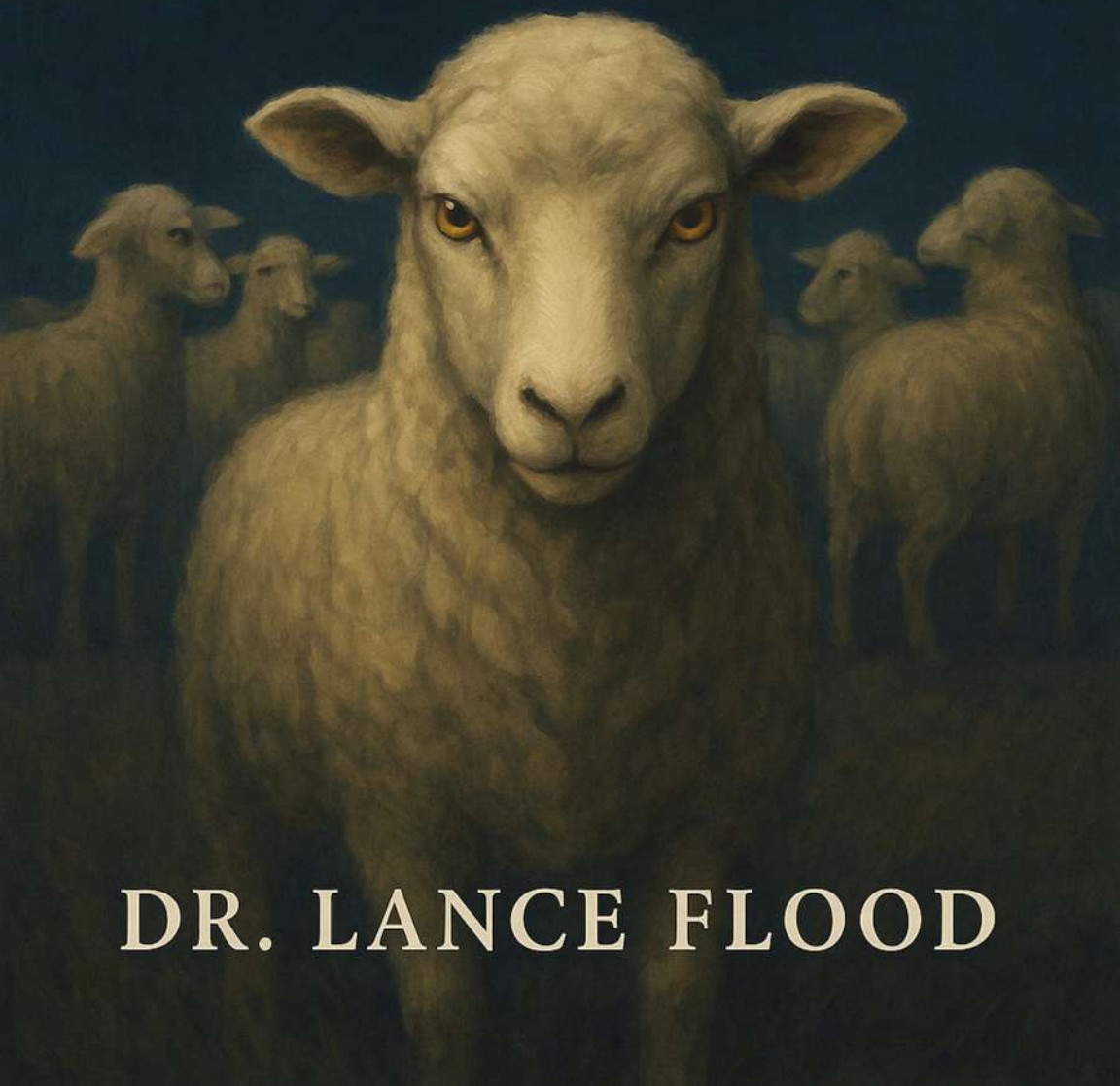


WHEN SHEEP BITE

A PASTORAL GUIDE TO
CLUSTER B PERSONALITY DISORDERS



DR. LANCE FLOOD

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an imprint of Amnesty Media Group

When Sheep Bite: A Pastoral Guide to Cluster B Personality Disorders

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The stories and characters in this book are fictionalized composites which have been created by the author solely for illustrative purposes. Any resemblance to actual persons is purely coincidental.

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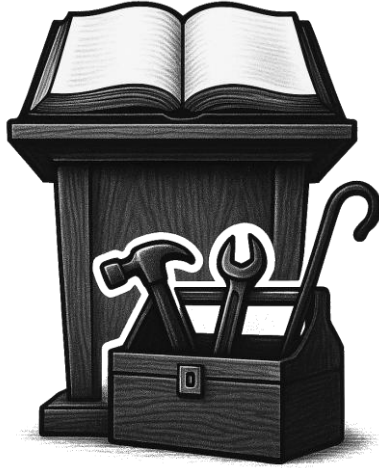
*For every shepherd who stayed when it would've
been easier to run—your scars are not wasted.*

Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.

— ZECHARIAH 13:7b

PREFACE:

The Shepherd's Toolbox Series



The Shepherd's Toolbox Series was developed to provide pastors and ministry leaders with clear, accessible guides for addressing the complex realities of mental health within the local church.

Each volume addresses a distinct area of struggle: personality disorders, mood disorders, anxiety disorders, factitious disorders, and issues of identity—all through the lens of pastoral care.

The aim is not to replace clinical treatment, but to equip shepherds with a practical framework for understanding, discerning, and responding to these challenges within the body of Christ.

Every book combines theological reflection, psychological insight, and ministry application, giving pastors tools they can immediately put to use in counseling, preaching, and congregational leadership.

Each title can stand alone, but will together form a comprehensive “toolbox” designed to strengthen the shepherd’s ability to care for the flock. Whether confronting disruptive behavior, tending to hidden wounds, or guiding those in seasons of deep struggle, these volumes serve as steady companions in the work of ministry.

It is our hope that this series will help pastors lead with greater clarity, compassion, and confidence, always pointing the way back to the Chief Shepherd who restores the soul.

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FOREWORD:

Restoring Health to God's People



One of the reasons so many pastors walk away from ministry is the abuse they receive at the hands of those they feel called to serve. All too often, their faulty ideas of humility and service require them to accommodate unhealthy behavior.

The resulting pain causes the leader to question their calling and sometimes even God for sending them into such dysfunction. Ministry leaders who become victims often do not recognize these behaviors as abusive until it's too late and the damage has been done to both them and the congregations they serve.

A wedding between theological training and psychological understanding in preparation for pastoral ministry is desperately needed. The sad fact is there are dangerous personality disorders that are especially attracted to the Church precisely because Christians—who are taught to patiently love and return curses with kindness—are all too often easily manipulated due to their compassion. Thus, toxic behavior is accommodated as opposed to confronted, and promoted as opposed to marginalized.

The good news is these disorders can be discerned and addressed in healthy ways. Just as God designed healthy bodies to produce white blood cells to combat infection, churches equipped with the knowledge in this volume can become healthy congregations which reject the diseased behavior of those dangerous personality disorders.

The goal of this book is to equip clergy and laity alike with the tools to recognize these behaviors in order to deal with them in a manner that is healthy for all.

Dr. Flood is uniquely qualified to share on this important subject. Having served as both a pastor to local congregations and a trained clinician in counseling, he possesses the expertise to diagnose and the experience to apply his knowledge the local church setting. He has done the Church a great service in writing this book.

— David Olson, *Senior Pastor*
Heartland Church, Ankeny, IA

AUTHOR’S NOTE:
Bleeding While Leading



Precious Pastor,

According to a recent study which has been released by Barna, over 42% of pastors in the U.S. have seriously considered walking away from full-time ministry in the past year.

Not because of theology.

Not because of sin.

But because of burnout, betrayal, and toxic church culture.

My name is Dr. Lance Flood and I’ve served as a pastor.

I’ve trained thousands through our counseling institute.

My doctoral dissertation focused on treating narcissism in couples.

But none of it spared me from breaking.

There came a point when the wounds didn’t come from the world, but from inside the church walls.

I've experienced ministry wounds that cut far beneath the skin, and I know how it feels to bleed out while leading.

My circumstances were so toxic that, following my departure just one year ago, I prayed for God to release me from ever shepherding another flock.

At the time, I was serving a small “family church.”

The kind where the word *family* means everything.

Unless, of course, you're not considered a part of it.

Perhaps you're even there now as you read these words.

It was the sort where faded pew cushions and wood-paneled walls whispered of yesterday, where the sanctuary air carries the musty scent of age, mold, and pride that lingers like a stale memory.

It was a place where time stood still, as did the membership.

Where lineage signals heritage, not welcome;

Where connection is defined by bloodlines, not belonging.

It was a place where pastors, like visitors, are only tolerated if they know their place. And while I came to serve, I ended up outside the very name that was supposed to mean belonging.

In time, I eventually learned that with some churches, “family” isn’t exactly an invitation. Instead, it’s a gate.

And not every shepherd is welcome past it.

The manipulation.

The gossip.

The narcissism.

The slander.

It almost crushed my calling.

In the end, it did drive me from the pulpit.

And that pain has birthed the book you now hold.

Through that crucible, I also discovered a sobering truth: Even the most seasoned, discerning shepherds can easily find themselves systematically manipulated when they elect to lower their defenses in the name of grace and compassion.

This project doesn’t come from a place of theory, but experience. I’ve lived the confusion of questioning toxic behavior dressed in religious language and wondering if I was the one losing my grip.

May this book serve as a lifeline for the shepherds who are still serving while broken.

May it fire as a warning flare for those nearing the edge.

May it shout like a protective voice for those who still believe the best, but need to become as wise as serpents.

May it be a shining beacon for leaders who've been gaslit, gossiped about and gut-punched—*all by the very ones they are called to love*.

And if one pastor is spared from what I endured...

Then none of it was in vain.

— L.F.

INTRODUCTION:

When Ministry Gets Messy



Harmed Shepherds, Harming Sheep

Pastoring is truly one of the most sacred and demanding roles within the body of Christ. It is a calling that paints with a brush of tenderness on one stroke and toughness on the next; blending wisdom with humility, and applying deep compassion with immovable conviction.

At its core, the pastoral call involves shepherding God's people by leading through verdant pastures, feeding living bread, protecting from unseen dangers, and bathing wounded hearts in care.

But what happens when some of the sheep bite?

There is a silent understanding among pastors that ministry can often feel like walking barefoot through a field of broken glass while still wearing a smile.

We often speak of the numerous joys of shepherding: the baptisms, the transformations, and the moments of genuine community.

But in quiet corners where pastors gather, different stories emerge. We hear of betrayal so deep it feels like a knife between the ribs, stories of criticism that comes not from enemies, but from those whom, through God's call, you pour your life into serving.

Church is supposed to be a sanctuary where broken souls find wholeness, a garden where unity blooms from the soil of grace. It's meant to be a refuge for the wounded and a lighthouse for those who are lost and wandering at sea. And most of the time, it is.

But if you've weathered enough seasons in ministry, you've likely encountered storms that left you clinging to the mast, drenched in confusion, drained of strength, perhaps even questioning the voice that called you onto these waters.

I can recall sitting across from a friend some years back, his eyes hollow from weeks of sleepless nights, his spirit crushed under the weight of a church conflict that defied all logic.

"I've tried everything," he whispered. "Prayer, fasting, one-on-one conversations, bringing in outside counsel. Nothing changes. It's like trying to reason with a hurricane."

His experience isn't unique. It's quietly epidemic in ministry, and at the same time, rarely addressed from the pulpit or in seminary.

Every pastor, if they serve long enough, encounter people whose behavior stretches beyond the familiar geography of normal human brokenness. These souls may arrive wrapped in packages of charm, passion, and persuasion but leave behind landscapes of bewilderment, division, and deep emotional wounds.

You may be questioning your own compass, wondering if you've steered the ship astray, or feeling guilty for drawing boundary lines in the sand. You have tried everything in your shepherd's bag.

Grace poured out like oil.
Counseling offered like bread.
Prayer lifted like incense.

Yet you still find the relationship spiraling into chaos.
The conflict didn't follow the map of logic.
Someone you trusted turned on you without warning.

Welcome to the invisible battlefield pastors rarely discuss: the effects of personality disorders in the church. Wounds cut deep here because they come from an unexpected place.

David captured this anguish perfectly in Psalm 55:12-14: *"For it is not an enemy who taunts me—then I could bear it; it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me—then I could hide from him. But it is you, a man, my*

equal, my companion, my familiar friend. We used to take sweet counsel together; within God's house we walked in the throng."

There's a special kind of pain when the injury comes from within the fold, from someone who shares communion, sings the same hymns, and professes the same faith.

When Sheep Bite is the first in a three-part series on the recognition and ministry care of personality disorders in the church.

It also serves as the inaugural volume in a larger collection called, *The Shepherd's Toolbox Series*. These resources will provide leaders with clinical insight and guidance for mental health issues that, while rarely discussed in church contexts, are desperately needed.

While there are numerous counseling books which address the issue of personality disorders in professional settings, very few are crafted with pastors in mind, especially those who are navigating pastoral leadership amid complex psychological dynamics.

Cluster B Chaos

This first volume focuses on what is arguably the most disruptive group in ministry settings: Cluster B personality disorders. These include:

Antisocial, Borderline, Histrionic, and Narcissistic. These are not just clinical terms confined to counseling offices.

They show up in churches.

They sing from hymnals with heavenly voices.

They serve on committees with tireless dedication.

They lead small groups with passionate conviction.

Sometimes, they even preach from pulpits with eloquent persuasion.

And when they go unchecked, the damage that they inflict can cut through a congregation like an unseen blade, devastating the very flock you've been called to protect.

Consider Grace Community Church, where a passionate member joined the worship team, quickly rising to a leadership position through exceptional musical ability and apparent spiritual depth.

In months, however, the once-unified team was fractured with whispered conflicts. Enduring members began leaving, citing vague "concerns" they were reluctant to share.

The pastor found himself constantly mediating disputes centering on this individual, who always emerged as the wounded party while others bore the blame. Small group discussions became dominated by their dramatic

testimonies and “special insights” that have subtly undermined those in leadership within the church.

What appeared first as religious zeal later revealed itself as an inability to function without being the center of attention: a classic sign of histrionic personality disorder that left a devastating wake of confusion and division.

Each of these disorders presents its own challenges, but all share a core pattern of emotional volatility, manipulation, or relational destructiveness. Pastors are often left unequipped to handle them, and the profound damage they can inflict on a church body.

These destructive patterns don’t announce themselves with fanfare. They infiltrate slowly, masquerading as spiritual zeal or genuine need, until they’ve poisoned the very wells from which we draw our strength to serve.

The psychological erosion is insidious, leaving leaders spiritually hemorrhaging while still expected to nourish the other sheep in the fold. It is a soul-crushing reality demanding both recognition and a biblical response. The silence must end and the healing must begin.

Furthermore, it’s the shame that accompany the wounds which can often keep us silent. We wonder what we did wrong. We question our calling. We replay conversations over and over in our minds, searching for the moment we might have steered things differently.

And in our silence, the enemy finds his playground, isolation breeds doubt, and doubt erodes the very foundation of our ministry. That is why the issue of personality disorders—namely Cluster B—is so critical, and why we must begin the series here.

Cluster B disorders not only cause the most noticeable disruption in congregational life, but they also tend to entangle pastoral leaders in cycles of burnout, compassion fatigue, and an abundance of discouragement. This is where many leaders are hurting and where we must begin to bring clarity, wisdom, and healing.

Consider this introduction as an introduction to hope itself. There is wisdom for these situations. There is biblical and clinical clarity. And there is a path forward, even when it seems shrouded in fog.

How This Book Is Structured

This is not an exhaustive clinical manual, though it draws on research like a well from deep waters. Nor is it a witch-hunt guide.

Many people struggle with pain, trauma, and emotional instability and not all of them have personality disorders. But some do, and because of this, shepherds require the level of discernment necessary to know the difference, just as they must distinguish between harmless shadows and lurking predators.

Perhaps you are skeptical about applying psychological terms to spiritual concerns. I realize that many seek to resist the integration of mental health concepts into pastoral care, fearing it might undermine the sufficiency of Scripture or reduce spiritual warfare to mere psychological principles.

But in my years as a pastor and a clinician, I've come to recognize that, in our efforts to understand God's creation, we must also include understanding the human mind. Just as we wouldn't ignore physical illness as simply "spiritual weakness," we must not dismiss psychological patterns as mere emotional immaturity.

In other words, God has given us both Scripture and science as tools for understanding His complex creation. Think of it this way: If a shepherd notices certain sheep consistently exhibit the same dangerous behaviors, actions that harm both the flock and the Shepherd, isn't it wisdom to study those patterns? To give them names? To develop specific approaches based upon those patterns?

This isn't reducing people to diagnoses. It's applying godly wisdom to protect souls entrusted to your spiritual care.

This book has been intentionally written to be concise, accessible, and pastor-friendly. It wasn't composed to be a dense academic journal, but rather a quick reference guide that you can return to, like a trusted map kept close at hand. This book aims to help you:

- Understand the core traits of the Cluster B disorders and how they often manifest in church settings.
- Identify toxic patterns that can undermine your leadership and harm the church body.
- Set godly, healthy boundaries that protect the flock without hardening your heart.
- Respond with both grace and wisdom, combining spiritual discernment with psychological insight.
- Avoid enabling destructive behavior brought by Cluster B traits in the name of “love” or “ministry.”
- Care for yourself, your staff, and your congregation when under relational attack.

The format of this book isn't just about information. It's about transformation. It's designed to equip you with both biblical wisdom and psychological insight so that you can protect your congregation, care for yourself, and effectively lead. Each chapter is structured to be direct, digestible, and practical.

For the chapters addressing specific disorders, you'll find a varied framework including such components as: identifying features, fictionalized vignettes, how traits manifest in ministry settings, pastoral tensions and dilemmas you may face, and biblically grounded and clinically informed strategies to navigate challenges.

At the conclusion of each chapter, you'll find a brief yet powerful section titled, *From Pulpit to Practice*. The consistent features in this section are designed to help you apply the insights to real situations. Each one includes the following:

- Scripture Reflection – A passage chosen to center both your heart and leadership.
- Chapter Summary – An overview to reinforce the key insights which were covered.
- Ministry Story – A fictionalized composite to help bring the material to life.
- Practical Application – Next steps for shepherding with clarity, courage, and compassion.

Whether you're facing conflict within leadership, navigating manipulation, or simply seeking to shepherd wisely in a complex situation, this section provides a clear, biblical pathway from insight to implementation.

Throughout these pages, we'll explore how to hold fast to Christ's example of love without sacrificing truth or enabling manipulative behaviors. We'll also walk through the emotional toll that comes with church leadership in the face of toxic personalities.

If you've ever found yourself replaying church conflicts in your mind and wondering where you went wrong, this book is for you.

If you've ever left a meeting feeling like you've just been put through an emotional blender, continue reading.

If you've noticed that certain interactions leave you feeling confused, drained, or questioning your own perceptions, then allow me to be among the first to say that you are not crazy.

And if you've ever been left spiritually gaslit, emotionally wrung out, or simply unsure how to move forward with a volatile church member, you're most certainly not alone.

The truth is you're facing a real challenge, one requiring more than simple pastoral instincts.

Listen closely: God hasn't called you to be anyone's savior, but a shepherd. And part of shepherding is protecting the flock. This doesn't merely apply to protection from external threats, but from wolves disguised in very familiar clothing.

Remember Moses, who faced rebellion not from enemies but from those within his own community?

What about Paul, who wrote of false brothers secretly brought in and those who caused divisions?

And what of Jesus himself, who encountered opposition not just from secular authorities but from religious leaders who should have recognized Him for who He was?

The challenges you face have biblical precedent, and Scripture provides wisdom for these very moments.

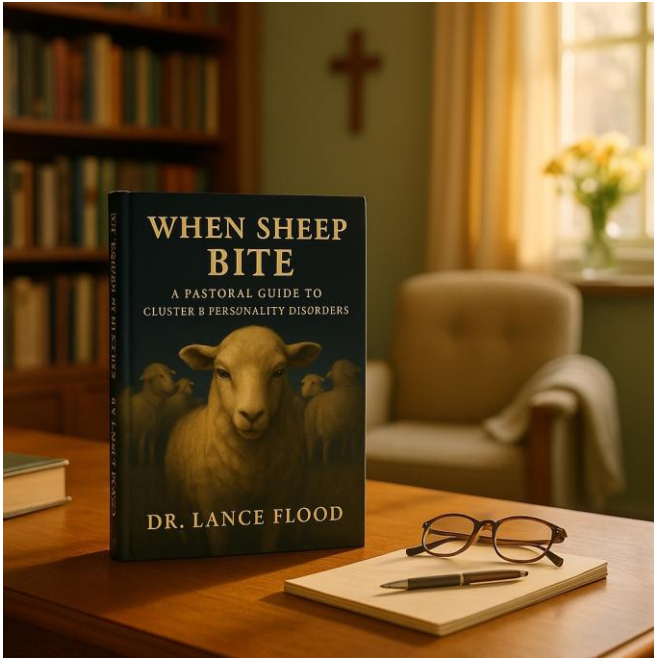
I want you to know you can both love well and lead well.

You can show compassion without being controlled.

And you can extend grace without surrendering boundaries.

Let's explore how together.

END OF BOOK PREVIEW



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Ministry was meant to be your calling, not your collapse.

They enter your church with sincerity, tears, and just enough Scripture to sound convincing. They ask for counsel. They volunteer to serve. They tell you they are hungry for truth. But as time goes on, the damage begins to surface. Gossip spreads. Divisions grow. You're left confused, weary, and unsure whether the problem is them, or you.

This is the silent suffering of far too many pastors.

Dr. Flood combines clinical insight with lived pastoral experience to shine a light on the dark undercurrents of ministry abuse. As both a clinician who specializes in Cluster B disorders and a former pastor who has survived the bite of a toxic flock, he offers clarity, credibility, and compassion to leaders who feel emotionally and spiritually ambushed.

In *When Sheep Bite*, you will effectively learn how to:

- **Recognize and respond to Cluster B behaviors in a ministry context**
- **Set firm, biblical boundaries without guilt**
- **Discern between the spiritually broken and the spiritually abusive**
- **Protect your family and your flock from emotional predators**
- **Heal from betrayal without becoming bitter or burned out**

This isn't a resource about revenge or retreat. It's a handbook for the faithful.

If you've ever been wounded in the line of spiritual duty, you are not crazy, you are not alone, and dear shepherd of souls...

You are not finished.

