

## **Oct 3/21 – Leader’s Guide - John 10:11-21 “Our Good Shepherd”**

### **Read John 9**

1. One of the most common story lines about the church that hits the news is the grievous failure of shepherds to care for the sheep. This story from John 9 illustrates the grievous failure of the Shepherds (Pharisaic synagogue leaders) to care for their sheep (the man born blind and his family). What are some contemporary examples of this failure of shepherds to care for the sheep?

*This question is simply to bring to the forefront of your minds the context into which Jesus is speaking so that his words can be directly applicable to the situation for which they were intended.*

*There are certainly many contemporary examples. Tim mentioned residential schools, the ongoing child abuse scandals that rock the Roman Catholic Church, as well as the high-profile pastors (Mark Driscoll, Bill Hybells, Carl Lentz) that were formed by a noxious mix of celebrity culture, misuse of power, and misogyny and had very public exposure and dismissal.*

*It would be profitable should your group be willing to go here to express perhaps some of the personal stories of harm from either a destructive shepherd or a spiritually abusive community. Jesus’ word of both confrontation and comfort is intended to speak to those places in our hearts.*

*Obviously there is sadly a lot of material that could be discussed in this question so would encourage you that once there is clarity on the kinds of situations Jesus is speaking into you can move to the next questions.*

### **Read John 10:11-21; Ezekiel 34**

2. Jesus words are steeped in Old Testament allusions. How does the Ezekiel passage help you understand the meaning of Jesus’ words? In particular what is he saying about and to the Pharisees and what is he saying about himself?

*He is naming the Pharisees as the kinds of Shepherds that Ezekiel is speaking against – they are hired hands – only in it for themselves - for the power and money.*

*As Ezekiel is a word of judgement Jesus is bringing the Pharisees clearly under the judgment of God for their behavior.*

*Ezekiel contains promises that God will one day come to shepherd his people Israel, that he will set Messiah as shepherd over Israel. So which is it, God as shepherd, or Messiah as shepherd? The only place it begins to make sense is here in John 10 as Jesus is claiming to be both God and Messiah come to shepherd the people in ways that bind up the wounded, seek and save the lost, serve the needs of the sheep.*

3. This teaching of Jesus is not spoken into a vacuum, they are being heard by the man born blind, the Pharisees, and the disciples. From the context of John 9 how would the teaching of Jesus land in the lives of...

i) The man born blind:

*That he was known and understood, known right the way to the bottom. That he was loved to the point of death a death that brings about a new future for him and for his world. He is invited into the fold of Jesus that is a new community not based on race or right belief or right practice but based on the Shepherd, his love, his goodness, his voice, his work.*

ii) The Pharisees:

*They are being invited to see their shepherding in light of his good shepherding. It is intended to expose the darkness of their way of being, their rule keeping over people keeping, their focus on religious practice over mercy, their serving of self over others. That exposure is meant to have be restorative in nature, an invitation to repent and enter into his fold, under his tender care.*

(note that in John 10: 19-21 they say he has a demon to discredit him and by 10:31-33 they want to stone him to death – what did they hear that stirred up such a strong reaction?)

iii) The disciples:

*The disciples are being invited to relate to Jesus as a sheep to a shepherd. This will be the direction of the following questions.*

4. There are many metaphors used in the bible to communicate our relationship to God. It is as Father to a son, King to a servant, Bridegroom to a bride, and here Shepherd to a sheep. In the sermon Tim mentioned that the primary truth the image was seeking to communicate about us is that we are entirely dependant upon the shepherd, entirely dependant upon Jesus. In what ways do we resist this truth?

*This is not an easy truth to receive. We certainly do not see ourselves as utterly dependent. We have made a cultural idol of self-sufficiency and most of us rely upon ourselves and then turn to God in the tough times when things don't go as we would want them to go.*

*There is often the fear that if we gave over all to God he would ask us to do things we don't want to do, go where we don't want to go, or give up things we don't want to give up.*

*It brings up to the surface the fundamental reality that we really struggle with trust – which is why Jesus' starting point into this metaphor isn't on us – he doesn't say - accept that you are utterly dependent and receive him as Shepherd. No – he invites us see his loveliness – his goodness – how he knows you right the way down – loves you to the point of laying down his life for you... The more you see who he is the more we behold his trustworthiness.*

5. From the imagery that Jesus uses in John 10:11-18 what makes him the good, the lovely shepherd? What distinguishing mark of his goodness is repeated? Does seeing these aspects of his goodness lead you to admit your dependent need and place more trust in him?

*You are known as the Father knows the Son. He knows you, knows the roads you have travelled, the pains you have suffered, the dreams you've dreamed, he sees the real you, the you you don't want anyone else to see, for fear that they will pull away. He knows you right the way down and instead of the rejection you fear – you are the treasure he holds dear for...*

*You are his own – his treasure. The shepherd treasured the sheep. They were his wealth – his very life. Out in the wilderness at night he would tuck them in a cave or crevice in the rock and then sleep at the only access point laying down his life between his sheep and the animals that prowled the desert at night in search of food.*

*The distinguishing mark of his goodness is that he laid down his life for the sheep. This is certainly an expression of how much he values and loves us but his death has eternal purpose. In vs. 17 he says he lays down his life "so that I may take it up again". The sheep are in real danger, under real threat and his death changes that. He looks through the cross to the resurrection. He takes our death that we might have life eternal. He takes our sin that we might walk forgiven and free in the way of righteousness. He takes upon himself the fury of the forces of darkness that he might flood the earth with his love and presence, the beauty of new creation.*

*The last piece of the question here is key – this is where the emphasis should be as you set up the last question. He knows us better than we know ourselves. His work is to make us and our whole world new. He values us more than his own life. If anyone is worthy of our trust it is him...*

In the sermon Tim mentioned the Navigators exercise. Separating your life out into all its areas (relational, recreational, financial, sexual, work etc) and ask yourself two questions. 1) Am I willing to obey all that I know God is asking me to do in this area? 2) Am I willing to thank God for all he is bringing into this area?

6. In what ways are these questions a good reflection of how we are expressing our dependence upon Jesus as our good shepherd?

*This is simply a reflection question that gets to the bottom of the central question of faith – do we trust Jesus – his love – his goodness.*

*To obey him is to say – he knows better than I as to what is best for me...*

*To thank him for whatever he brings is to say he has purposes in this that I will never fully understand but I do know he is good and that he loves me...*