



## HomeGroup **LEADER** Discussion Questions

Week 5: Jan 30-Feb 5th

**PICK 2-4 QUESTIONS FROM BELOW THAT YOU THINK WILL BE MOST HELPFUL FOR YOUR DISCUSSION. IT'S FINE AS WELL FOR YOU TO USE THESE QUESTIONS AS INSPIRATION FOR EVEN BETTER QUESTIONS YOU CREATE ON YOUR OWN!**

What separates the *good* shepherd from anyone else? Is it training? Skill? A magnetic personality? No, the good shepherd is one who cares deeply. He's on high-alert for threats to the flock. A regular "shepherd" might go through the motions but is only on high-alert for a paycheck. If danger looms, he's the first to run. The good shepherd, though? He couldn't be more different! He *runs* into the fray and willingly pays all that He has to save his poor, defenseless creatures. He's the Shepherd we sheep would do well to stay close by.

Main Texts: John 10:1-21 (emphasis on verses 11-21); see Ezekiel 34 for background

### CONNECT

1. What are some differences you've observed between people who work only for a paycheck and those who work out of loyalty to a mission or love for those around them?

*This touches on one of the main issues that appear in this week's passage. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who gladly sacrifices for His sheep, but the hired hand is interested in collecting a paycheck and self-preservation.*

2. What did you find most significant in this week's sermon? What questions did it leave in your mind?

### LEARN

3. Early in chapter 10, Jesus describes how the sheep know the voice of the true shepherd. As practical as you can be, what do you think it means for Jesus' followers to "know his voice" (v. 4)? *There's an application question similar to this one below. For this section, we're trying to focus on how Jesus' followers (e.g., the 12 disciples, other followers) knew His voice. For one, they would have spent a lot of time with Jesus, listening to His teaching, seeing His deeds, and knowing what was from Him and what was not. Ever since, Jesus-followers have had His words recorded for us in the pages of Scripture.*

4. Jesus contrasts the *good shepherd* with the *hired hand* in verses 11-13. What are the main differences you see?

These differences should be clear from verses 11-13—the good shepherd lays down His life while the hired hand leaves the scene of trouble. The good shepherd cares for His sheep, but the hired hand does not.

5. How does Jesus' death fulfill or express the description of the good shepherd? How does it also relate to the purpose Jesus states for his life in verse 10? In other words, how does His death lead to abundant life for His sheep?

The ultimate expression of Jesus' self-sacrificing nature is obviously the cross. The symbolic or metaphoric images begin to overlap here, as the Good Shepherd is also described as a slaughtered lamb (e.g., Isaiah 53:7; Revelation 5:6). His self-sacrifice at the cross and resurrection has brought victory over sin and death. This future resurrection is our hope of "abundant life" in the future, but following Jesus now brings a present abundance as well as we live by the power of His Spirit and are free from the condemnation of sin (Romans 8:1).

6. In verse 18, why do you think it's important that Jesus lays down His life of his "own accord" and that he has "authority to take it up again"?

Jesus never lost control of the circumstances that led to His crucifixion. His sovereignty never lapsed as He laid down His life through death and took it up again in resurrection. Jesus was not overcome by His opponents, but gave Himself over to death to accomplish the Father's will (v. 17).

#### APPLY

7. What does it look like for you to hear and know Jesus' voice? How does a person know Jesus' voice from all the other "noise" and "voices" of our world?

The point here is to have a discussion about how we can hear Jesus' voice and offer each other ideas on how to do that well. The emphasis should be on knowing Scripture since it contains the inspired words of God and eyewitness (earwitness?) testimony to what Jesus said. The more familiar we are with His words in Scripture, the better equipped we will be to discern what is from Jesus and what is not. Other voices in our world can be incredibly loud—social media, Netflix, news outlets, etc. We need to be more influenced and shaped by God's Word than we are by these other "voices" in our world.

8. How does it make you feel to think of Jesus caring for you as the Good Shepherd?

This is an invitation to slow down and reflect on how good Jesus is to us! If you use this question, consider expressing the comments as praises directly to God in a time of group prayer.

9. John 10 presents our situation as one of complete safety as we walk with Jesus, but grave danger if we stray from His side. What form do the dangers (i.e., the "thief" and the "wolf") of our world take on today?

This topic is commonly expressed as "eternal security." There are a lot of potential answers to the variety of dangers we face today. In general, you could think of the following: the appeal of any false teacher who misrepresents the gospel, the lure of materialism, an obsession for career/workplace achievement, etc. Think as well of the famous parable Jesus tells in Matthew 13 in the parable of the sower.

**GOING DEEPER** (a.k.a., Extra Credit!)

Jesus is our Good Shepherd who protects and provides for us both in this life and in the life to come. Psalm 23 expresses this reality in a beautiful, vivid fashion. We encourage you to read Psalm 23 again this week, but as an exercise of worship, consider substituting the word *LORD* in verses 1 and 6 with “Jesus.” Do the same with all of the 3rd person pronouns (“he”). David knew God by the Hebrew name, *YHWH (Yahweh)*, which appears as *LORD* in our English translations. He didn’t have the privilege, though, of knowing that this same “Shepherd” is *Jesus!*

As you read through the psalm, reflect on how Jesus fulfills David’s Spirit-inspired words. You can do this as a personal exercise, but it could be great for your group to do together.

Answer the question, *How have you seen Jesus do these things in your life?*