

Lesson Objectives

- We are continuing our look this week at Jesus via John's Gospel. We want them simple to be in God's word.
- Help them to understand each of the characters in Jesus teaching: sheep, shepherds, thieves and the gate.
- Help them to understand that Jesus is their shepherd.
- Help them to desire to follow Jesus more.

Lesson Notes

- Before you launch into the study, have snacks available and set aside 15-20 minutes for people to slow down from their day and connect with others. Use this time to personally build relationships and trust with individuals there.
- Also remember that it is always helpful to spend time with the members of your group outside of your small group time. If you haven't in a while, make it a point to setup time with a few individuals or the whole group outside of your normal time. This could be a fun group hangout or simply lunch with one or two people in your group.

Getting Started

- After 15-20 minutes, let everyone know you are getting started and ask them to grab a seat.

Review

To get us started this week let's review.

- What did we talk about last time? [We looked at the story of the woman at the well. Jesus invites the woman to ask Him for living water that won't leave her thirsty. When she asks, He reveals that she has been going to men to satisfy her thirst. Before Jesus could satisfy her thirst He wanted to show her what she had been going to for satisfaction. Jesus eventually pointed at His Spirit as the living water that actually satisfy. We finished the time sharing about the things we go to for satisfaction and thinking about what it would look like to trust Jesus for satisfaction.]

Launch

This week we are continuing our look at who Jesus is by reading John's experience with Jesus. This week we will be looking at John chapter 10. To get our time started answer the follow question:

- If there is one person or leader that you would be most willing to follow who would it be? Why?

Well today we are going to look at a passage that talks about Christ leading us. Before we dive in, let's pray. [Ask one of the participants to pray.]

Discussion

Read verses 1-10

- How would you describe the two main characters Jesus is depicting here? [There are many things you can encourage them to see here. Things can include: one is a thief and a robber; one goes in by the door and one goes in another way; one is known by the gatekeeper; one is heard by the sheep; one calls out his sheep and leads them; the thief comes to steal, kill and destroy; etc.]
- What characteristic does Jesus point to as their primary distinguishing characteristic? [The way they enter the sheep pen. This is a simple question. You don't have to linger here.]

One commentary refers to the one that enters the sheepfold by a way other than the door an “Otherwayer” and refers to the one that enters the sheep fold by the door as a “Gatewayer”. He goes on to say that: “The person coming to the people of God through the Gate is a person who come to them with one great concern and message -- the Lord Jesus Christ and his gracious relation with a needy world. The Gatewayer is the Christocentric (the Christ-centered person), who has no other agenda, message, theme, or emphasis than Jesus and what Jesus said, says, did, does, and will do.”

- In your community, how have you experienced Gatewayers, people whose concern and message for you is centered on Christ?
- How have you experienced Otherwayers, people whose concern and message for you seems to be centered on something other than Christ?
- Jesus argues that anyone that doesn't come through Him is a thief and only comes to steal, kill and destroy. Do you agree with this idea? Why?
- In contrast to the thief Jesus says that He came that we may have life and have it abundantly. Do you believe that the Christian life is an abundant life? Why?
- In what way is the Christian life abundant?

Let's keep reading to see what Jesus gives as a solution to Otherwayers and thieves and what else he has to say about abundant life.

Read verses 11-15

In these sections Jesus portrays us as sheep. This isn't a flattering assessment of people as sheep are notoriously dumb animals in need of lots of care and guidance.

- Do you agree with the idea that we are dependant upon on someone outside of ourselves to take care of us? Why? [You can be prepared to share from your own experiences here about being dependant.]

In this section Jesus also portrays himself as not only the door but also the shepherd. To better understand the shepherd's role in calling the sheep out of the sheep pen read the following two stories:

Some years ago I was staying the night in some shepherds' tents near Gilead. The tents, to the number of ten or twelve, were pitched in a wide circle enclosing a considerable area. In the evening some six or seven flocks were brought within the camp of protection. In the morning, when the time came for the shepherds to take their charges out to pasture, instead of attempting to separate their respective flocks from the crowd of goats and sheep scattered promiscuously over the enclosed space, each man went a little way beyond the ring of tents, and standing there uttered his special call. Instantly the whole mass of sheep and goats was in motion, and as the shepherds continued to call, the several flocks separated themselves, each streaming out of the camp in the direction of their respective guides, and in five minutes not a goat or sheep remained inside. Looking again shortly afterwards, the various flocks could be seen diverging to all points of the compass, each following its own shepherd.

A Palestinian woman who had lost her husband in a recent conflict with Israel and who was consequently in dire need was finally permitted by a very hesitant Israeli officer to call her sheep out of a huge mass of sequestered and detain animals. The officer at first pointed to the pen containing hundreds of animals and humorously quipped that it was impossible for her to call out her own small flock. She asked that if she could in fact separate them herself, would he be willing to let her take them? He agreed. A soldier opened the gate and the woman's son produced a small reed flute. He played a simple tune again and again -- and soon sheep heads began popping up across the pen. The young boy continued his music and walked home, followed by his flock of twenty-five sheep.

Now that we have a vivid picture of sheep being called by their shepherd, consider that Jesus says that His sheep also know his voice.

- How does a person become more familiar with Jesus' voice? [There could be a lot of things said here but the most clear way that we learn Jesus' voice is by reading his word. We also learn Jesus' voice from peer and Christian leaders.]
- Why is it significant that Jesus lays down his life for us? [Again a lot of observations could be made here. But it is significant that Jesus lays his life down for us in that we know that we can trust him enough to follow him. If he will lay his life down for me I know he is for me. It is also significant because I make tons of mistakes in life and its great he takes on the punishment for those mistakes.]

Summary

Ok at this point we have worked through Jesus' analogy of sheep, the gate, thieves and shepherds.

- How can we summarize all that Jesus is saying in this section about these 4 elements of His teaching? [Let them answer. After you have talked about one person's answer you can say, "That's great how else can we word it?" Let a few answer to make sure they are all grasping the text.]

Apply

Now that we understand the passage more clearly let's talk about what this means for our lives. [Have them break into pairs for the application questions.]

To make, arguably, the most important observation from this passage consider what Martin Luther had to say about this teaching of Jesus:

Luther agreed that the term 'sheep' is not the most flattering description of either the Church or of Christians because a sheep is a notoriously dumb animal, BUT THIS IS WITH ONE EXCEPTION: Luther says, "Nevertheless, sheep have this trait above all other animals, that a sheep soon learns to heed its shepherd's voice and will follow NO ONE but its shepherd... it ALWAYS knows enough to KEEP CLOSE to its shepherd and look to HIM for help," and if you think about it, though they are considered dumb this is maybe THE MOST INTELLIGENT INSTINCT OF ALL.

- To what extent is this true of your life?
- What are situations that you follow Jesus? What are situations you are more likely to not follow Jesus.
- What can you do this week to better stay close to your shepherd and follow no one but Him?

Pray

In the passage Jesus is encouraging us to follow him. Praying for yourself and those with you, let's ask Jesus to:

- Help us to hear his voice this week.
- Help us to follow him as we hear his voice.