

HEART OF A SHEPHERD

Life Group discussion guide, week 1

KEY PASSAGES:

Matthew 7:28 The crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death...

Psalms 23:1-4 The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Matthew 7:24-27 "Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the

John 10:1-18 "Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them. Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. (He's hinting at Easter here right? Gotta wait a few more Sundays for that one though).. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

1 Peter 5:8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

QUESTIONS:

1. Do you have an example where someone helped make something abstract or confusing into something clear and relatable for you?
2. Shepherds have names & calls for their sheep, and the sheep know that voice and those sounds so very well. What is a sound or signal you know so well that when you hear it, you know intuitively and confidently what it is? (Don't get too deep here yet, have some fun!)
3. Sheep are notorious for being kinda dumb and making stupid mistakes over and over. We saw the video clip of a sheep being rescued after falling into a drainage ditch, then skipping away only to fall right back in. What is your drainage ditch?
4. Sheep are known for making bad decisions--but they're also really good at following a leader. Share some time in your life where your decision-making could have benefitted from following a leader.
6. Read Psalm 23:1-4 above. David was a shepherd by trade and saw numerous parallels between his role in the sheep's lives and God's role in *his* life. Do any of David's parallels stand out to you personally?
6. Read John 10:10 and 1 Peter 5:8 above. A thief breaking into the sheep pen has only one agenda. Jesus uses this to illustrate Satan's agenda with us, God's sheep... contrasted with *His* agenda for the sheep. In light of God's character and Jesus' teaching, how do you understand the statement "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full"?