

HEART OF A SHEPHERD

Life Group discussion guide, week 2

KEY PASSAGES:

Matthew 25:31-46 (sheep and the goats parable, full story)

Romans 5:8 God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Matt. 22:37-40 "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself. The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.'"

Ephesians 2:8-9 it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

James 2:14-17 what use is it, my brothers, for a man to say he "has faith" if his actions do not correspond with it? Could that sort of faith save anyone's soul? If a fellow man or woman has no clothes to wear and nothing to eat, and one of you say, "Good luck to you I hope you'll keep warm and find enough to eat", and yet give them nothing to meet their physical needs, what on earth is the good of that? Yet that is exactly what a bare faith without a corresponding life is like—useless and dead.

1 John 4:20 Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.

Is 53:3 He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

Ps 34:18 The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Isaiah 61:1 The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.

Isaiah 66:13 As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem.

Mt 5:3-10 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Rev 21:4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

2 Corinthians 4:8-9, 16-17 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.. therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

QUESTIONS:

1. Do you have a life example where you received a mixed bag--good news and bad news together?
2. Jesus told this week's story of the sheep and the goats as the last illustration of his final sermon to His followers before his death. If you had to pick one closing message to leave with Christians before your death, what would it be?
3. The key phrase in the story of the sheep and the goats has to do with loving and caring for "the least of these" which was 1st century cultural language for being down and out, at the end of your rope, etc... and a number of common examples of what that looked like in Jesus' culture are listed (hunger, sickness, etc). What conditions would you include in that list in our current culture?
4. Jesus includes the word 'stranger' in his list, a term that referred to someone you deemed not welcome in your circle, often due to moral, ethnic, religious or socio-economic factors & prejudices. Who are our 'strangers' today?
5. Both the sheep & goats regarded the King as their Lord. Describe in your words the difference(s) between them.
6. Matthew 22:37-40 above was Jesus answering the question "what is the greatest commandment?" What parallel(s) do you find with the sheep & goats story?
7. Read the passages in blue. What context do they give you for Jesus' heart for "the least of these"?