

HEART OF A SHEPHERD

Life Group discussion guide, week 5

KEY PASSAGES:

Luke 19:1-10 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Ezekiel 34:2-4 "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the fat, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally.

Ezekiel 34:5-6 So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them.

Ezekiel 34:11-16 This is what the Sovereign Lord says: "I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign Lord. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.

John 10:16 "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.

Isaiah 59:1 Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear.

Psalms 136:12 With a mighty hand and outstretched arm; His love endures forever.

QUESTIONS:

1. Share a time where you experienced the stigma of being an outcast with other's fingers pointed at you.
2. Now, share a time in your life you were the one pointing the finger at the outcast.
3. Who did you grow up believing were "those kind of people"--people who were culturally / socially / morally blacklisted and probably deserved what they got?
4. Why do YOU think Jesus spent so much time relationally investing in these people and defending them?
5. Can you think of a time in your life where you knew someone who wasn't easy to love... but after you learned their story, you had more compassion on them?
6. Two statements: 1) When you see Jesus for who He really is--you begin to see people as Jesus sees them; 2) When you begin to see people the way God sees people, you can begin to see yourself the way God sees you. Which of these is harder for you and why? Spend the remainder of your time talking about these and praying together about how God can help you see the way He sees.