

Small Group Bible Study Questions

- A) One of the great problems in the church today is a “cult” of leadership which has resulted in people (you and me included) following a preacher rather than the Lord. Can you think of instances where this kind of thing has resulted in painful, even deadly, consequences?
- B) Jesus, in the short allegory He shares in John 10:1-5, says that “he goes out ahead of them...” (John 10:4a). In what ways has Jesus “gone ahead” of us and shown us the way we should go? How literally do we need to “follow Jesus?”
- C) Many cult groups have used John 10:16 as biblical proof that they are the “other fold” to which Jesus was referring. How would you dispute this kind of “bible-bending?” Who is Jesus speaking of in John 10:16, and why is it significant to the flow of the book of John?
- D) John 10:9 says that the sheep “go in and out.” What does this mean? Whatever you conclude, it definitely seems to mean that the sheep are not just sitting still, looking for their nourishment in the sheep pen! How can we apply this kind of “sheep behavior” to our own lives?
- E) Perhaps you have thought about being a leader, or have been asked recently to serve in an area of ministry here at Long Beach Alliance Church. Jesus Christ gives us some strong guidelines for the heart that every “good shepherd” should have in relation to “the sheep.” With the rest of your small group, make a list of absolutely necessary characteristics for leaders in the church based on John 10:1-21. After discussing this list, take some time to consider one of those listed qualities where God most wants to see growth in your own life. Share that area with your group and spend some time praying together for that key area and for accountability!

Called By Name

Long Beach Alliance Church • January 16th, 2005 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**BUT HE WHO ENTERS BY THE DOOR IS A SHEPHERD OF THE SHEEP. “TO HIM THE DOORKEEPER OPENS, AND THE SHEEP HEAR HIS VOICE, AND HE CALLS HIS OWN SHEEP BY NAME AND LEADS THEM OUT. “WHEN HE PUTS FORTH ALL HIS OWN, HE GOES AHEAD OF THEM, AND THE SHEEP FOLLOW HIM BECAUSE THEY KNOW HIS VOICE.
~ JOHN 10:2-4 (NASB)**

1) Shepherds & Sheep

- A) Jesus, developing the ideas he began in John 9:39-41, discusses the concept of blindness in relation to the spiritual leadership of the people (John 10:1).
- B) Jesus emphatically (10:7) shares a short allegory* (10:6) borrowing from the “local knowledge” of first-century sheep-farming practices (10:1-5).

* An allegory is when the characters in a story represent other things or people which have a significant moral or spiritual meaning. Allegorical stories are often long (e.g., *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan), although this one by Jesus is very short. They are related to parables, although parables have different characteristics, particular of which are more of a “story with a moral” approach. There are no parables in the book of John (only allegory and “figures of speech”), but you will find several parables in the Synoptics (Matthew, Mark, Luke). Keeping the principles of interpretation in mind, we should see the genre of literature which includes allegories and parables as literature which should not be pressed for every fine detail and point.

- C) There are several characters/items which have significance in the allegory. The door of the sheep pen (John 10:1) is clearly explained as being Jesus Christ (10:7 & 9). Jesus Christ is the way to becoming part of the "one flock" (10:16).
- D) The sheep fold (or sheep pen, NIV), is the location of the people. In this case, the sheep fold contains the Jews (contrast with 10:16), and thus, the comments of Christ are directed to the Jewish leadership (10:1). There are two sheep folds (the Jews and the non-Jews).
- E) The shepherd of the sheep is a spiritual leader. There are two kinds of shepherds. The first kind of shepherd is a "thief and robber" (10:1, 8) who seeks to "steal, kill and destroy" (10:10). The first shepherd sneaks into the sheep fold (10:1), and is equated (ultimately) with a hired hand, in it for personal gain and not for the sheep (10:12-13).
- F) The second shepherd (10:2) enters by the door/doorkeeper (probably one and the same -- 10:3). This shepherd, by virtue of his relationship to the doorkeeper, is a good leader who guides and cares for the sheep (10:9) in the same way that Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd (10:11) does.
- G) The sheep are all those who are in one of the two folds (10:1, 16). They are responsive to the voice of their shepherd (either the Good Shepherd -- 10:14-15, or the evil shepherd/hired hand -- 10:3-5).
- H) The Good Shepherd cares for His sheep and will even die for them (10:11). The evil shepherd cares more about his own well-being than the sheep, and flees in the face of danger (10:12-13) from the wolf (the devil?), cf. Ezekiel 34:1-10.

2) The Death & Resurrection Foretold

- A) Out of the allegory of the Good Shepherd, Jesus relates that He knows His own (sheep) in the same way that He is known by God, and also knows God (10:14-15). There is absolute assurance and security in salvation because it is in Christ, and not in ourselves (10:29)!
- B) Because of Christ's obedience, even to the point of death, God loves Him (10:17). The picture presented here is that Christ is in perfect harmony and union with God's will for His life. Christ experiences the love of God by fulfilling God's will!
- C) What has been alluded to in past passages (John 2:4, 19, 7:30, 8:20) and will present itself in more vivid form later (12:23, 13:1), is clearly stated in John 10:18. Jesus is in control† of His own death and resurrection!
- D) In a parallel to John 9:16, Jesus' "words" (in this case, the undeniable claim to a special relationship to the Father) cause a division amongst the Jews (10:19).
- E) The question of whether Jesus was "Demon or Deity" arises again (10:20-21), and sets the stage for the "high point" of Jesus' claims and the end of His "public" ministry...

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 † Jesus affirms that He Himself has the power to take up His life again. R.H. Strachan says, "In the New Testament [sic] Jesus is never represented as rising again by His own power." See also Sir Edwyn Hoskyns: "Elsewhere throughout the New Testament (i.e. apart from here and 2:19) the Resurrection of Jesus is always referred to as an act of God." It is undoubtedly true that the New Testament prefers to speak of God as raising Jesus, but Jesus several times predicted that He would rise (e.g., Mark 8:31; Luke 24:7) and some passages say that He did rise (Acts 10:41, 17:3; 1st Thessalonians 4:14). We ought not to put any opposition between the Father and the Son in this matter, nor should we doubt that the habitual New Testament form of expression is that the Father raised the Son. But we should not overlook the fact that there is also a strand of New Testament teaching that says that the Son "rose." The present passage is part of this strand. (NICNT, Morris, 456-457).