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LEADER'S GUIDE

For discussion following the sermon on January 18, 2009

The Good Shepherd

Sheep listen to the voice of the shepherd. They follow him, and they run from the thieves and robbers. In Chapter 9 of John, the blind man couldn't see, he could only hear. But what he heard was the voice of the good shepherd, and he risked expulsion from the synagogue in order to follow this shepherd. The "shepherds" of the synagogue meant him harm and he knew it. In this passage we will discover Jesus the Shepherd is:

- Sovereign
- Savior
- Sacrifice
- Sufficient

In Ezekiel 34 there is a contrast between shepherds, who claim to be good, yet who are evil and self-serving, and the One, true Shepherd who IS good and who is self-sacrificing. We find an indictment of the shepherds of Israel by God himself. In contrast to these evil shepherds we find the good shepherd; Jesus Christ. His intent is not to harm the sheep, but rather, to lead and guide them to himself, and to the Father. His goodness is honorable, just, pure and noble. He leads with strength and purpose along with great love and care. Jesus, the good shepherd, sacrificially lays down his life for a flock of sheep to do that which the sheep cannot do for themselves. This perfect, atoning sacrifice is sufficient to take away the sin of lost and helpless sheep, who will, at times, question his goodness, resist his voice, and wander away. Yet the good shepherd is not deterred. He comes to give life, and will use all means possible to draw these sheep to himself. Are you listening to him?

Leader's Guide

Personal Preparation

- As you think about the call of spiritual leaders, make a list of the characteristics of self-serving leadership and self-sacrificing leadership as stated in Ezekiel 34. As you review your lists, what impresses you about your ministry as a spiritual leader?
- Without God's enabling, our efforts will fall short. Pray that the good shepherd will lead and guide you as you, in turn, lead others to him.

Group Preparation

Sheep are easily led astray. While the picture of the good shepherd is also found in Psalm 23, we may see a caricature of Jesus as gentle and kind (which he is) without considering the strength of his sovereignty and sometimes hard-to-understand purposes as he leads us. In today's lesson, it will be important to consider Jesus in the fullness of who he is and the way he leads.

Discussion Questions

1. In chapter 9 of John, the blind man was rejected by self-serving shepherds, but he heard the voice of the good shepherd. What do you think he heard? What drew him?
2. As it relates to the good shepherd, define good. (...beautiful, noble, honorable, worthy of praise. In other words, Jesus is fulfilling his job as a shepherd in an exemplary fashion so that such goodness is able to be perceived (Grundmann 1965:548).
3. Describe the characteristics of spiritual "thieves and robbers" who, for their own selfish gain, lead sheep astray. How do believers guard against false teaching and belief?
4. Jesus is the gate (v. 9)—the only way to go in and out. While this fact is a great stumbling block for many, describe the benefit it offers to the sheep.
5. Jesus said that he has "come that (we) may have life, and have it to the full" (v.10). Describe what a full life means, especially as you think of other believers around the world who do not enjoy the prosperity that we do in this country.

6. The relationship between the good shepherd and the sheep is one of intimate knowledge and response (vv. 14-15). How do we recognize the voice of the shepherd? How do we gain more trust in his leading? How do we find more "rest" in his provisions? How does this metaphor play out in our own lives?
7. Why is sometimes so difficult to follow the shepherd?
8. As you consider the great, sacrificial love of Jesus Christ, recount the ways that Jesus leads, guides, prepares, comforts, and assures you through the difficulties and the joys of this life. Worship him for who he is and what he has done!