

5. There are people today who are sheep, who live in the religious “pen”, but do not belong to the good shepherd. Like the religious leaders, what are they missing?
6. There is often a range of responses to the doctrine of perseverance. According to the *scriptures*, what is your response to those:
 - Who believe they have truly come to saving faith but live in habitual, deliberate sin?
 - Who have, by their own testimony, walked away from serving or following the Lord?
 - Who live in fear that they may someday fail and will break relationship with the Lord?
7. Recall a time when unrelenting temptation, sin, or discouragement tempted you to walk away from the faith. What did God do that kept you moving forward? What confidence does that give you for the future? What hope does that give you for those who are currently struggling or seem to have departed from the faith?
8. As our lives testify to the scriptures, God is glorified. How has God’s persevering work in your life resulted in praise and thanksgiving to God for who he is and what he accomplishes in us and through us?

John 10:22-42

Lesson 17
For January 25, 2009

Dori Sear and Dr. Jerry Nelson

LEADER’S GUIDE

For discussion following the sermon on January 25, 2009

Jesus, The Christ

Have you ever feared giving up on the faith? In moments of great confusion, temptation or discouragement, have you ever wondered if you will persevere to the end? In your desire to “finish well”, do you ever question your internal resources and resolve? Perhaps you know others who once lived for the Lord and now live for themselves. Will they hear “well done, good and faithful servant”? Will you? As we consider this week’s passage, we find:

- Two kinds of sheep
- Two different responses
- One awesome Savior!

“How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” (v. 24) After hearing all of the testimony, witnessing the miracles first hand, and hearing the words of Jesus himself, one wonders how the religious leaders could be so dull. But for them, it wasn’t a matter of comprehension, it was a matter of belief. However, these leaders were not interested in more factual evidence. They wanted a public confession from Jesus that he was, in fact, the Christ, the Messiah. Then they could rightfully accuse him of blasphemy and have just cause to kill him. But Jesus knew the intent of their hearts. He also knew that the word “Messiah” had been corrupted through the years and would not accurately represent his mission and purpose.

Jesus said there are two kinds of sheep; those who believe, who hear his voice and follow and are, indeed, his own. Those who do not believe, who listen but do not hear, who have no intention of following the shepherd wherever he may lead, are clearly not his sheep. Note that both kinds of sheep were in the pen, coexisting in the same space with the same shepherd. Some belonged to Christ, others didn't and never will.

But to the sheep who belong to him, Jesus gives a two-fold hope: they will have eternal life, and they will persevere to the end. Nothing will thwart the purposes of God. There is no suffering, temptation, success, rebellion, discouragement or apathy that will cause these sheep to be expelled from the fold. Like the prophet Jeremiah, sheep may even want to give up.¹ But there is a fire within them (us) that cannot be extinguished, and it is that fire of the Spirit that keeps our feet moving forward against all odds. Our confidence does not lie in our ability or fortitude, but solely in the grace of God! We are set apart and we are his own! In times of great temptation or discouragement, it is a great source of strength, peace, and hope and confidence that the Good Shepherd is there to lead us and guide us safely home.

¹ *Jeremiah 20:9*

Leader's Guide

Personal Preparation

- Think back to the times when your faith has been tested. What were the circumstances that surrounded your greatest temptation or discouragement? Did you ever have plans (that would lead to your spiritual demise) fail? How did God rescue you from defeat? What people, scriptures, or situations impacted you? It is important to consider these things in light of today's text in order to effectively lead your group this week.

Group Preparation

This lesson may surface any number of issues for your group:

- Those who may currently be facing temptation or discouragement
- Those who are not truly following the shepherd (unregenerate)
- Those who may be following Jesus half-heartedly
- Those who have loved ones who have wandered away from the fold
- Those who may struggle with the theology of the doctrines of grace

As you consider each person individually in your group, ask God to grant you wisdom, sensitivity, and boldness as you lead this week. We are especially dependent on the work of the Spirit as he guides and directs this lesson.

If you end with testimonies/praise to God for the ways he has led through difficult times, you might also want to end in prayers that simply focus on the attributes of our loving, great God.

Discussion Questions

1. How would you have responded to the religious leaders as they posed the question and subsequent statement in v. 24? What would be your emotional response (if different)?
2. What makes a rejected truth so disturbing?
3. What was the corruption of the term "Messiah"? Why did Jesus distance himself from being identified as such?
4. What connotation does the word "Christian" have among the world? Have you ever wanted to distance yourself from being called a Christian because the implications are so erroneous?