Apostles Houston

Life Group Study: The Good Shepherd

**Love and Laughter**

Creating a Sacred Space

Welcome→ Embrace→ Refresh

**Remembering Our Purpose**

 Why Do We Do Life Groups? *(feel free to communicate this in your own words)*

In Acts 2, we read how early Christ followers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teachings, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. In Life Groups we follow their example with the hope of becoming more like Jesus, the goal of our salvation.

**Being Known**

Story Telling

We believe that loving God and others begins by being known.

*In 5-7 minutes, what do you want us to know about yourself (~5Hs)?*

Pray and Celebrate

Be sure to honor whatever is good or beautiful about their story, and ask one or two people to pray over those who just shared.

**Following Up**

 Responding to God’s Word

Last week, we were encouraged to spend time praying different types of prayers, possibly with a prayer partner. Which type of prayer seemed most effective?

**Hearing the Word**

Hearing: (*Read “Context” and then John 10:11-16. Then pray for God’s grace to understand.*)

* Before we dive in, what comes to mind when you think about sheep? A shepherd? What is their relationship? Do you recall other stories in the Bible about sheep? What are some things that you heard in the sermon on Sunday?
* In verse 11, Jesus said that he is “the good shepherd.” In verse 12, he described a “hired hand” who is not “a shepherd.” Both the shepherd and the hired hand tend the sheep, so what distinction did Jesus make and why is it important?
* In verse 16, Jesus referred to sheep that are of “this fold” and “not of this fold.” Who are these two groups of people? Why is he concerned about the sheep that are “not of this fold?” What will cause them to be of “one flock?”
* A shepherd builds trust with his flock over time by taking good care of his sheep. How has Jesus demonstrated that we can trust him? Have you given Jesus the opportunity to demonstrate that you can trust him in all things? How can you deepen that trust?
* Sheep recognize the shepherd’s voice and come to him when he calls. Jesus said in verse 14, “I know my own and my own know me.” Who did Jesus refer to when he said, “my own?” What are some ways that we can learn to recognize and respond to Jesus’ voice?

Obeying (application):

* Following on from the final question, spend some time this week thinking about the “voice” that you respond to. How can you become more attuned to distinguishing between the “hired hand’s” voice and “the good shepherd’s” voice?

**Soul Care**

Prayer Requests

This week, break up into groups of MEN and WOMEN for prayer. Along with sharing prayer needs, create some space for confession. Then, remind each other of God’s mercy, and pray for God’s grace to repent and be healed (1 Jn 1:9; Js 5:16).

**Announcements**

* No announcements.

Teacher’s Notes

Context

* For many people, the thought of a shepherd and sheep invokes a scene of serene life and green pastures. That description does not match the life of a shepherd in Jesus’ time. Sheep from one flock were often kept overnight for safekeeping in a pen along with sheep from other flocks. The sheep were separated by the sheep responding to their shepherd’s voice. As Jesus described, there were dangers associated with being a shepherd which could at times cost the shepherd his life. The shepherd had to lead his sheep into the countryside to find pasture and water for the sheep to survive. The threat of attack from predators was real and it was the shepherd’s job to protect his sheep. Being a shepherd was a hard, demanding life.

Specific Insights

* The sheep were dependent upon the shepherd. Often, the wealth of a family was tied up in their livestock, so the loss of their sheep could threaten the well-being of a shepherd’s family. Examples: (1) Jesus talked about leaving 99 sheep to find the one lost sheep. (Matthew 18:12-14 and Luke 15:3-7); (2) David was a shepherd and talked about killing a lion and a bear to save his sheep. (1 Samuel 17:35-35)
* The good shepherd will lay down his life for the sheep whereas the hired hand will abandon the sheep in times of trouble. The sheep are helpless without the shepherd. The test of a true leader is his willingness to sacrifice for his followers.
* “Of this fold” refers to Israel. “Not of this fold” refers to the Gentiles. Jesus said that there will be “one flock, one shepherd.” This one flock is the One Church which follows the one shepherd, Jesus.
* Jesus demonstrated that we can trust him because he loved us so much that he was willing to die on the cross to save us from God’s right judgement for our sins. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to be our helper. We build trust by remembering what Jesus has done for us and by choosing to become more reliant on him.
* Shepherds were required to separate their sheep from sheep that belonged to other flocks which required the shepherd to know his flock and his flock to know their shepherd’s voice. In our modern world, we hear many conflicting voices calling for us to follow them. We learn to “hear” Jesus’ voice by reading scripture, by inviting the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus’ voice, and by testing with other followers of Christ the message that we hear. We can learn to recognize the Good Shepherd’s voice and follow his voice rather than the voice of others. The Good Shepherd will protect his sheep.