

LIFEGROUP STUDY
FOLLOW ME: KNOW HIS VOICE
March 21, 2021

LEADER NOTES

OVERVIEW

Welcome back to our LifeGroup study, Follow Me. In John 10, Jesus describes how he is the Good Shepherd and that his sheep know his voice and follow his voice. If we want to heed the call to “Follow Me” we have to learn to discern his voice from the other voices that call us and we have to determine that we want to actually do what he says. As our Good Shepherd, Jesus calls out to us. The goal of today’s study is to ask these questions – “Do I hear Jesus’ voice?” “Will I follow His call?”

ICEBREAKER I Love that Voice!

Imagine if for your next birthday, you could reserve anyone you wanted to come sing at your party. Think of someone of whom you would say, “Wow, I love their voice!” This could be someone famous or someone who only you know their undiscovered talent! Who would you like to invite to sing Happy Birthday to you?

STUDY

1. On Sunday, Chris shared a key question of following Jesus – “Will you trust Him to guide you?” **How are you allowing God to guide you these days?**

Jesus – The Good Shepherd. John 10:1-21

The time Jesus gave his teaching we find in John 10:1-21 was during Hanukkah, a winter festival celebrating the rededication of the temple after it had been defiled. Two hundred years before Christ, Greek soldiers captured and pillaged the Jerusalem Temple, took its treasures and artifacts, and made it unusable for worship. In the winter of 165-164 BC, a Jewish army led by Judas Maccabeus reclaimed the Temple and rededicated it to the Lord. The Festival of Hanukkah (“dedication”) marked this dedication. During this festival, priests examined their commitment to service, using Ezekiel 34 as their principle text for reflection. At this Hanukkah celebration, Jesus used the shepherd theme from Ezekiel 34 to distinguish between himself as the good shepherd (John 10:1) and Israel’s current religious leaders as bad shepherds (10:10).

Read John 10:1-21

2. Read verse 1 again. **What did Jesus mean by this warning about thieves?**

LEADER NOTE: In John 9, Jesus responded to some Pharisees who were offended by His words (see vs. 39-41). In John 10:1, Jesus warns his followers about false teachers like the religious leaders of His day. To do this, Jesus uses the analogy of a sheepfold (a pen with low stone walls topped by thorny branches to protect the sheep from danger). A sheepfold had one gate. Any invasion of the pen was a threat to the flock. A bad shepherd was like a thief or a robber. He exploited the sheep (God's people) for his own interests and did not care for or nurture them. Jesus used this analogy to warn his followers about the Jewish leaders of his day. In our day, we should also heed Jesus' warning about those whose voice would harm us.

3. Imagine Jesus giving a similar teaching today. **How might He reword His warning?**

LEADER NOTE: Jesus was a Master at using common references of His day to teach. In our day, Jesus may warn us about false voices we can be influenced by through people, the media and online. He might say, "Watch how you're influenced by those around you! Don't let them pull you away from Me." "Watch what online voices you allow in your life. Don't allow those voices to steal away your commitment to Me."

4. Read verses 2-5 again. **What does the Good Shepherd do? What do His sheep do?**

LEADER NOTE: The Good Shepherd calls His sheep by name and leads them out of the sheepfold. A middle Eastern shepherd is well known for having intimate knowledge of the sheep. They often lead their sheep with flute tunes, songs or verbal commands. Jesus, your Good Shepherd, knows you intimately and leads you in His way. The sheep (Jesus' people) "... follow Him because they know His voice." In verse 5, we see the sheep distinguish a stranger's voice from their Shepherd's voice. They run from the stranger. It is interesting to note that the Good Shepherd does not drive His sheep from behind. He leads them and they follow.

5. **What helps you know Jesus' voice?**

LEADER NOTE: Knowing Jesus' voice begins with a commitment to follow Him. This is about trusting in Jesus as your Sin Forgiver and Life Leader by putting your faith in Him. We can cultivate our ability to know Jesus' voice by regularly spending time with Him, by reading Scripture, thinking about what we've read, applying it to our lives and talking to God in prayer. God has given us his Holy Spirit to help us to know His voice and follow (see John 14:15-27).

6. What are some ways you can discern if you are hearing Jesus' voice or another voice?

LEADER NOTE: This is a question we have likely all asked! How can I be sure I am hearing God's voice? Here are some keys: Use the Bible as your guide. Does what I'm hearing align with the principles of the Bible? If I'm hearing a voice that is telling me to sin in some way, this is not God's voice. Other ways to discern are through prayer (asking God to make His voice clear to you) seeking the godly counsel of other followers of Jesus and through the Holy Spirit's guidance through our circumstances. God can teach you important things through the discipline of waiting on Him for clear direction. It is important to keep the Bible as the top guide for discerning God's voice.

7. Read verses 6-10 again. How does Jesus contrast Himself with the thief?

LEADER NOTE: The thief's purpose is to "steal, kill and destroy." This is a picture of misleading voices and ultimately of Satan's purpose. Wrong voices in our life can steal us away from following Jesus, kill the work God is doing in us and ultimately destroy our lives. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who leads His people to salvation (see Acts 4:12). In Him they find good pasture. (see Psalm 23:1-2). Jesus' purpose is to bring us life!

8. Read verses 11-16 again. How does Jesus contrast Himself with the hired hand?

LEADER NOTE: The hired hand represents the false teachers of Jesus' day and ours. The hired hand will not sacrifice for the sheep. When danger comes, they run away. Jesus, by contrast, sacrifices his life for the sheep (vs. 11, 15). In saying this, Jesus was looking ahead to the sacrifice He would soon make by dying on the cross. In the face of danger, Jesus did not run. He guarded us and saved our lives by sacrificing His life for us.

9. Read verses 17-18 again. What did Jesus mean that He had authority to lay His life down and take it back up again?

LEADER NOTE: Jesus' death was voluntary. He was not a martyr or a victim. His decision to die was freely given in obedience and intimate relationship with His Father. Jesus' resurrection was not an afterthought in which God rescued His Son from tragedy. God could not be contained in a tomb, and since Jesus and the Father are one, Jesus possessed the authority to rise from death.

10. Read verses 19-21 again. **Why do you think people reacted as they did to this teaching?**

LEADER NOTE: Jesus' teaching divided his audience once again. This happened often (see 6:66-69, 7:43, 9:16). Just as people in Jesus' day were divided about his Him, people in our day are as well. Will I put my faith and trust in Jesus? Will I say "yes" to Him? How I answer these questions is key to how I will respond to teaching.

11. **How might you acknowledge your need for the Good Shepherd this week?**

NOTE: Many of the insights in our Leader Notes this week come from the NLT Illustrated Study Bible notes section for John 10.

PRAYER

Creekside supports Paul A. with Wycliffe, here are some things we can be praying for from him:

We're launching a new "concentration in Bible translation" within the BA Linguistics program at Tyndale. It's a special training track that combines linguistics, Biblical languages, and cultural anthropology. We're hoping that this will attract new students, especially those with a strong missional focus. Let's pray to that end!

I've resumed work with 'BA' in South Asia. We had hoped to finish up his project last summer but the pandemic put a wrench in those plans. We're trying to finish up now . . . I think we can finish within the next few months, but BA is stretched pretty thin (he has a lot of other responsibilities with his organization and family, etc.) and he's feeling stressed, suffering from migraines, etc. Pray for his health and encouragement.