*The Big Picture*

*Study 9: The Good Shepherd*

*John 10:1-21*

**Icebreaker**

Go around the circle, everyone say your name, where you are from, and answer this question: What animal do you think represents you and why?

**Intro**

Tonight we are going to read a story from the Bible together. As Christians, we study the Bible because we believe that it is God’s word to us. We believe that humans wrote the different books of the Bible, but they did that with God’s help and guidance. God gave us the Bible so that we could use it to learn who he is and understand His plans. So the Bible is full of lots of different stories and teachings, but they all help tell a bigger story about God and about the world we live in, and how He is going to restore the brokenness we see through Jesus. It is the story of God and the story of us!

In this series we have been looking at the big picture story in the Bible, starting from the beginning. The passage we are going to look at tonight is from the book of John, which is all about the life of Jesus. Because we believe that God wants to help us understand His story, we are going to pray and then we will get started!

**Pray**

**Intro to the Passage**Anyone remember what we read about last week? (Last week we read about how Jesus told people that He was the Bread of Life, and that anyone who came to him and believed in him would never thirst or hunger. He taught people that He could truly satisfy them!)

A few weeks ago, we talked about how many of the religious leaders did not like Jesus. They did not like the way he criticized them or that he spent time with “sinful” people. Tonight, we are going to read TWO passages: one that is how Jesus responds to the religious leaders by giving an illustration about sheep, and the other is a poem from the Old Testament that is also about sheep and shepherds.

*Have everyone read the passages silently to themselves, and write down questions they have as they read. Then, read the passage out loud, each person reading one verse.*

**Psalm 23**

**1. According to this poem, who is the author’s shepherd? What does the shepherd do?** The Lord. He provides for us, leads us, restores us, protects us, blesses us, etc.

**2. To you, what do you find most interesting about this psalm? What stood out to you as you read?**

**Any questions about it?**

**John 10
3. Who were the people in this passage?** Jesus, the crowd

**4. In order to explain things to the Pharisees, Jesus uses an illustration. What does he talk about?** Sheep and shepherds, thief, hired hand

**5. Who does Jesus say that He is?** Jesus says he is the gate, and also the Good Shepherd. **How is he “the gate”?** When he says he is the gate, he is saying he is the only way (the gate) to God, the only way to be saved. **What makes Jesus the Good Shepherd?** When he says he is the good shepherd, he is trying to say that he provides for and protects his people. He came to offer life for the sheep (and abundant life at that!), he lays down his life for his sheep, he knows his own and his own know him.

**6. What does a shepherd do for his sheep? How is that different from the thief or the hired hand?** He calls his sheep by name, he leads them, he provides for them, he protects them. The thief’s purpose is to kill, steal, and destroy, and the hired hand runs away when problems arise because he doesn’t really care about the sheep.

**7. Who do you think the sheep represent? How are we like sheep?** The sheep represent the followers of Jesus. We are like sheep because sheep are dependent on the shepherd to protect them and lead them…they cannot live well on their own. In the same way, we need God to lead and guide us.

**8. In verse 16, Jesus says he has other sheep that are not of the same sheep pen. What do you think he is talking about? Who are the other sheep?** Gentiles…the nations of the world! Jesus didn’t just come to save the Jews, he came for people all over the world.

**9. In the last half of the passage, Jesus repeats that he is going to do something four times. What does he say he will do?** Sacrifice his life for his sheep.

**10. Why do you think he says this so many times?** Because he wants them to realize he didn’t come just to teach or heal people…he came to give his life and die on the cross to pay for his people’s sins. People were beginning to see that he was the Messiah, but He wanted to make sure that they knew he was not going to do what they expected.

**11. Why do you think Jesus would be willing to sacrifice his own life for other people?**

**12. Why do the people say that he must be demon-possessed or crazy?** Remember Psalm 23…The LORD is our shepherd. By saying that he was the good shepherd, Jesus was claiming to be God.

**13. How would you describe “the good life”? Personally, what do you think makes someone’s life good and meaningful? (Instead of bad and empty?)** (After letting people share, you can share your own thoughts.) As we read about last week and some this week, Jesus offers to satisfy our souls. He promises to provide guidance and direction and basic needs so that we don’t have to worry about things. And He promises to provide us with a love that is better than anything else, a love that motivated him to give up his own life for us. It just comes down to whether or not we can trust that He *is* the good shepherd, the one who can truly satisfy our souls.

**14. Right now, what do you personally think about this idea that Jesus is the good shepherd? That he is someone who can love you and take care of you and give up his own life for you, someone who can satisfy your sol? Is that appealing to you? Hard to believe? Confusing? (and why?)** We are all at different places when it comes to spirituality and what we think about Jesus, and that is ok! It takes time to figure out what you actually believe about God and the world.

**15. Do you have any other questions?**

**Closing**

We believe that Jesus is like a good shepherd because he watches over his people, provides for them, and knows each of them by name. He offers them life that is satisfying and fulfilling. And he is able to do all of this because he sacrificed his own life when he died on the cross to pay the punishment for our sins and restore our relationship to God. When he rose from the dead, he sealed the deal. He loved us so much that he was willing to die for us so that we might have life, and now he wants us to give up control and let him be our Shepherd and guide. Now, obviously it can be difficult to grasp that and to believe that, especially if you grew up in a culture where it isn’t normal to believe in God. But we believe that Jesus wants to help you understand who he is more than anything!

For most people who become a Christian, they make that choice because they feel His love or have the experience of hearing His voice. Jesus himself said that He calls out to people and when they hear his voice He leads them. He wants to help you see that He is real, to help you trust that He will satisfy your soul….all you have to do is ask Him to help you see and understand! To close tonight, we want to give you a chance to pray. Praying might seem strange or scary to you if you’ve never done it, but all it is talking to God. You don’t have to follow some formula or say specific words…you just ask and say what is on your heart! So if you are really curious about Jesus and would like Him to make it clear if He is real and this is all true, I encourage you to pray and ask for help! (You have nothing to lose!)

We will start with some silence, and if you want, you can pray out loud and ask God for help. If you don’t feel comfortable with that, it is also ok to pray silently to yourself.

**Pray**