



LIVE the **WORD**

IT'S EVERYTHING!

SMALL GROUP LEADER

Shepherd

Shepherd

SCRIPTURE READING: John 10:11 & 27

Group leaders should:

- **"Set the table" for interaction and group discussion by (4 minutes):**
 - explaining the idea of the week's theme
 - explaining the context of the main passage(s) to be discussed
- **Debrief from weekly reading (8-10 minutes)**
- **Facilitating, Discipling, Guiding, Shepherding (30 minutes)**

Small Group Questions:

- 1. Why does the Bible use shepherd to picture God's relationship with His people?**
- 2. What does it mean to say the LORD is my shepherd?**
- 3. What are the characteristics of those who know Jesus as their good shepherd?**
- 4. What do you need to do this week to hear the voice of the good shepherd and to then follow Him?**

SET THE TABLE

A good shepherd loves his sheep. They know each one. They lead, feed and protect their flock. The evidence that a shepherd is good is that his sheep are safe and his flock is strong. Good shepherds grow their flocks. Without the shepherd the sheep are lost. When the sheep have a good shepherd, all is well. Jesus is the Good Shepherd.

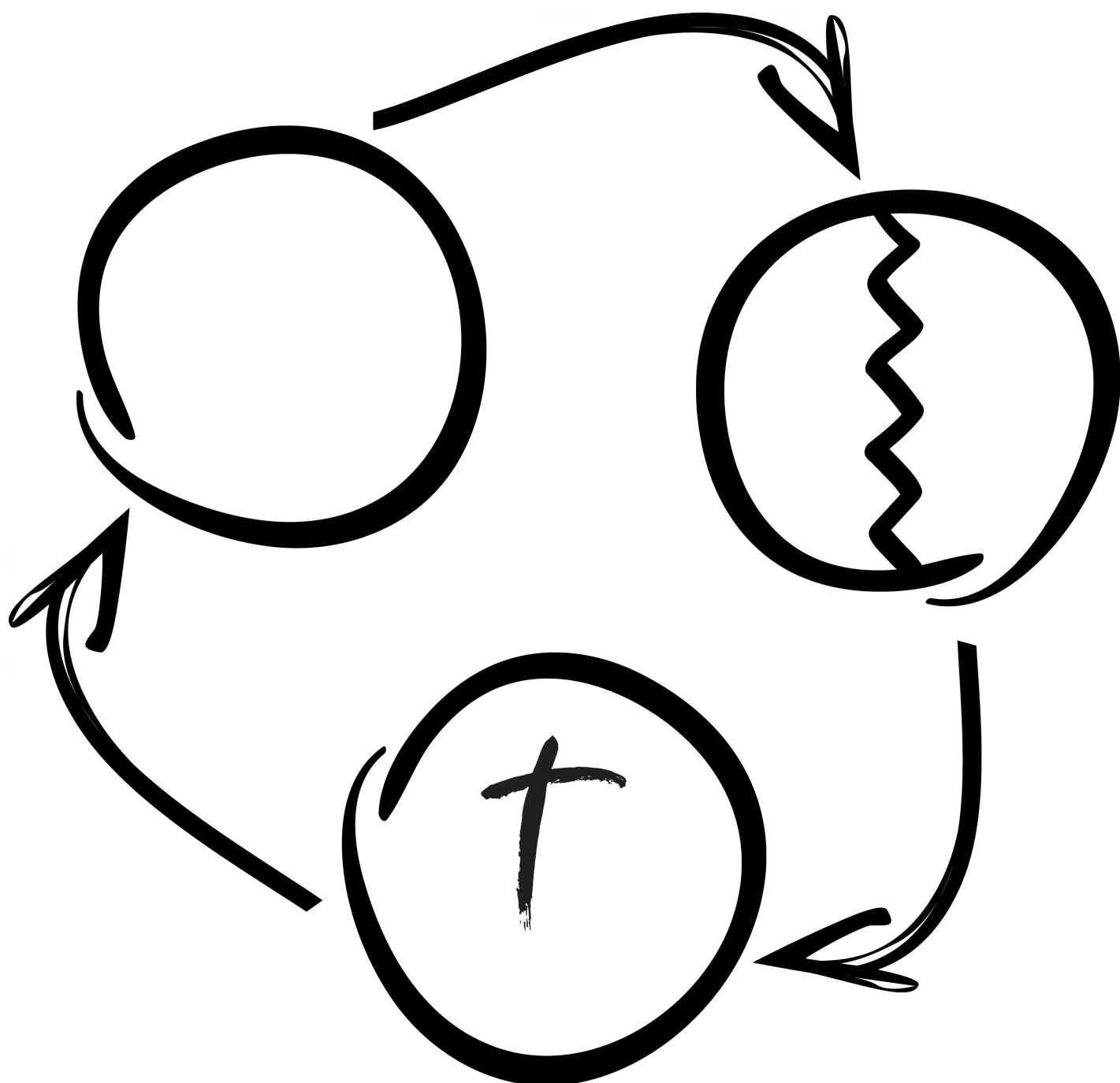
The shepherd theme is essential in understanding God's relationship with His people and His people's relationship with Him. Shepherds play key roles in both the Old and New Testaments. Each shepherd plays a vital part in preparing us to meet and understand Jesus.

The high point of shepherd in the Old Testament is Psalm 23. The LORD as shepherd leads and cares for His people. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part, Psalm 23:1-3, details the benefits to those who know the LORD as shepherd. For them the LORD provides rest, refreshment, and He restores them to wholeness. The amazing thing in this part is that God does all of this for His own name. The second part of the chapter, verses 4-6, tell us that the benefit to those shepherded by the LORD is that this happens in life's hardest seasons and in the presence of their enemy. The degree of blessing seems only to increase as life's difficulties and dangers increase.

Pastors are called to shepherd the flock of God (church) with accountability to the Chief Shepherd, Jesus.

The highpoint of shepherd in the New Testament is John 10. Jesus is the good shepherd who gives his life for His sheep. Jesus uses the shepherd theme to make several important points which indicate whether a person is in the Good Shepherd's flock.

1. Jesus alone is the good shepherd. All others put the sheep in danger (John 10:11-12).
2. Jesus' commitment to have His sheep is ultimate. He gives His life for the sheep (John 10:11).
3. To belong to Jesus' flock you must have a relationship with Jesus (John 10: 3-4, 14-15, 27).
4. Jesus' sheep do follow Him (John 10:27).
5. Jesus has sheep in far off places who have not even heard the message yet. Because they are His sheep they will hear and follow (John 10:16).
6. Not everyone who encounters Jesus are His sheep. Therefore, they will not believe (John 10:26).



Shepherd - Commentary

Shepherd is a theme that runs from Genesis to Revelation. While different people were shepherds, the picture of the shepherd takes us deeper into our understanding of God's relationship with His people as their shepherd. And it is essential in understanding the "I am" statement of Jesus, "I am the good shepherd.'

Shepherds in the Old Testament

Abel. Abel was a shepherd and offered the first born of his flock which was pleasing to God. In Genesis 4:2 Abel is "a keeper of sheep." When God exposed Adam and Eve's sin, He replaced their leaf coverings with garments made from skin. The covering of their sin required sacrifice for the covering of sin, the atonement for sin. So Abel brought as offering to the LORD the sacrifice of the first born of his flock (a theme running through the Old Testament that points to Jesus as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world") and the LORD accepted Abel's offering. On the other hand, Cain brought as an offering the works of his own hands and God rejected Cain's self-effort that could not atone for sin. That is why Cain was jealous of his brother and killed Abel.

The Patriarchs. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob the founding fathers of Israel (and thus the forefather of the Lord Jesus Christ) were all shepherds. There are two important aspects of them being shepherds. The first relates to the covenant that God made with Abraham to make of him a great nation and to bless the nation through his seed. God repeated the covenant to Isaac and to Jacob. The patriarchs were not just shepherds, they were prosperous shepherds. Their large flocks were a sign of God's faithfulness and blessing in the covenant.

Second, being shepherds taught them much about their relationship with God. For example, in Genesis 48:8-16 before he died Jacob blessed Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, and in the blessing gives his testimony about "God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day." Jacob acknowledges that it is God who guides, provides, and protects. Then Jacob blesses Joseph in Genesis 49:22-26 when he speaks of God's protection of Joseph as the "Shepherd, the Stone of Israel."

Moses. Moses was a shepherd on the backside of the desert when God spoke to him and called to him out of the burning bush. Moses moved from shepherding sheep to shepherding the people of God. It was as a shepherd taking care of his father-in-law's sheep that he led the flocks to the west side of the wilderness and to Horeb the mountain of God. God revealed himself to Moses as "I Am Who I Am," and commissioned Moses to lead the children of Israel out of bondage. Being a shepherd was an invaluable experience for Moses in leading stubborn and grumbling people.

David. David was a shepherd who was chosen by God to rule the nation of Israel. The LORD sent Samuel to Jesse's house to anoint one of the sons of Jesse as the next king of Israel in 1 Samuel 16. Jesse had seven of his sons appear before Samuel, but each was rejected with the LORD saying that He did not look on the outward appearance of a man, "but the LORD looks at the heart." Asking if there was another son, Jesse replied that the youngest, David was out keeping the sheep (shepherding). Samuel called for David and anointed him as king. In 1 Samuel 17 when David volunteered to go out and fight Goliath, Saul said he was too young to face the giant. David replies with what he had learned as a shepherd in verses 34-35, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him." Then David put five smooth stones in his shepherd's pouch and went and slew Goliath. In 2 Samuel 5:2 The Lord tells David, "You will shepherd my people."

Shepherd - Commentary

Psalm 23. The high point in the Old Testament picture of Shepherd is Psalm 23. While it is a Psalm often used in funerals, it is a Psalm about life.

Who He is. The Shepherd is the LORD, Yahweh the covenant and redemptive name of God. It is the name God revealed to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3, “I Am Who I Am” the eternal self-sufficient God. He does not need us, but we desperately need Him. He is constant; He never changes. He is faithful in His care.

Who we are. “The LORD is my shepherd. The “my” speaks of:

- Relationship—a personal relationship with the LORD.
- Ownership—the shepherd does not belong to the sheep; the sheep belong to the Shepherd.
- Dependence—we are entirely dependent on Him for everything.

What He does. Psalm 23 is filled with active verbs.

- He leads—provision in the green pastures
- He makes—peace by the still waters
- He restores—He guards from wandering into danger
- He leads—in growth in righteousness in living
- He comforts—the picture of the shadow of the valley of death is of one of the deep valleys the Shepherd leads the sheep through. There is danger everywhere for thieves and predators. The rod was used by the shepherd to fight off the thief or the bear or lion. The staff was used to guide the sheep through the danger.
- He prepares—He has defeated the enemy.
- He anoints—He gives power and joy through the Holy Spirit.
- He fills—In Him we have everything we need.

How He changes us

- We will “fear no evil” because He is with us.
- We will have abundant life as goodness and mercy follow us.
- We have the assurance of eternal life and will dwell with Him forever.

Shepherds in the New Testament

At the Birth of Jesus. In Luke 2:8-20 it was to lowly shepherds that the angel of the Lord announced the good news, the best news, the joyful news, “For unto us is born this day is born in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” The shepherds were the first eyewitnesses of the babe lying wrapped in swaddling clothes; the Word became flesh to dwell among us; the fullness of the Godhead came bodily. The shepherds then shared with others about the child. Then they returned to their sheep praising God for all they had heard and seen.

Pastors. In 1 Peter 5:14 pastors are called to shepherd the flock of God, the church,

- Pastors are to feed the flock of God on the Word of God.
- Pastors are to lead the flock of God in doing the purposes of God.
- Pastors are to protect the church from false prophets.
- Pastors are to serve as examples to the flock of God.
- Pastors do all with accountability to the Chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus.

Shepherd - Commentary

The Good Shepherd. John 10 is the high point in the New Testament on Shepherd. Jesus is the Good Shepherd.

- The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep, verses v 15
- The sheep hear His voice and He knows their name and leads them out (salvation), verse 2,
- In verse 16 Jesus says that He has “sheep not of this fold” The inference Jesus is making is shocking to His detractors. It’s not only Jewish sheep that God is after. God will grow His flock from all the nations of the earth. Jesus has foreign sheep.
- His sheep hear His voice and follow Him, verse 27.
- He gives His sheep life and life more abundantly, verse 10.
- He keeps His sheep forever, and no one can snatch them from His hands, verse 29.

Sheep without a Shepherd. In Matthew 9:36-38 when Jesus saw the crowds coming to Him, He had compassion on them because of their lostness. Then the Bible gives one of the most graphic pictures of lostness because they were like. “sheep without a shepherd.” Without a shepherd the sheep is hopeless and helpless. Without a shepherd the sheep is defenseless against the enemy, the thief that comes to kill, steal, and destroy. Without a shepherd the sheep is defenseless from predators, lions and bears or wolves and wild dogs, who hunt and kill. Without a shepherd the sheep will wander into danger. To see really what it means to be a “sheep without a shepherd, read Psalm 23 as a lost person would read it:

The LORD is not my shepherd, I will always be in want,
I have a hunger that nothing can fill, I have no green pasture.
I have no peace, no still waters.
My soul is empty.
I wander in the paths of unrighteousness for my own name sake.
When I walk through the shadow of death I am overwhelmed by evil, there is no one to
comfort me.
My enemies destroy me,
I have not power or joy,
My cup is empty,
Surely heartache and misery will follow me all the days of my life,
And I will dwell in Hell.

It is an unspeakable horror to be lost. That is why Jesus commissioned us to “pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into the harvest.”

We must passionately and consistently share the gospel to make disciples by:

- Helping people join the good shepherd’s flock by repentance and faith.
- Teaching them to stay close to the shepherd.
- Teaching them to follow the shepherd.

The eternal shepherd. In Revelation 7:17 Jesus the Lamb is the shepherd of those whose robes have been washed white in the blood of the Lamb. He will lead and guide them to the springs of living water in the New Jerusalem and God will wipe away all their tears.