

Knowing God

Bible study #2

Perspective on the Bible study:

Many things are the same as last week: Meet in a good place. Get there early. Start/end on time. FOOD. Be warm. Etc. Relationships are still #1. Work at building community, being honest, caring for each other.

Don't rely on e-mails as your primary motivation for getting people to come. Do it the old fashioned way – visit them, meet with them, etc. Work as hard to be with them as week 1. E-mails are only good for a final reminder.

As always, you need to make this lesson your own. Work it through. **ADD YOUR OWN COMMENTS OR ILLUSTRATIONS FROM YOUR OWN JOURNEY.** Know it well enough to shorten it. Teach it from your heart and go after the heart. This isn't "5 good facts about Jesus as a Shepherd." Rather, this is "How awesome is this – intimacy with a Shepherd who will never leave me and who will die for me. WOW!"

You'll need a pack of 3x5 cards (enough for each person to have 2 cards, one for the beginning and one for prayer at the end)

Focus of this study: for students to understand the difference between knowing about God and really having a relationship with Him

Time: Icebreaker – 20 minutes, Bible content – 35 minutes, Announcements – 5 minutes

Icebreaker (have fun, but do NOT let this kill TOO much time)

Note: Relationships are the most important thing at this stage of the group, but especially if you have a large group you need to figure out a way to control this to no more than 20-25 minutes. If you don't, by the time you do announcements you won't have much time left for the Word and people will wonder, "When are we going to look at the Bible?" Furthermore, it is the Bible that will help change their lives. We need both – Bible and relationships. So think through your choice of icebreakers. Be warm and fun but keep it moving and be wise; it can be done ☺.

EXPLORE

Hook -- move through this quickly! The idea is simply to make the point. Don't lose 10 minutes here.

Q Who is the most famous person you've ever MET? Listen to answers. Then ask...

Q Who is the most famous person you've ever KNOWN?

Q What, would you say, are 2-3 major differences in knowing facts about someone and knowing them? (personal interaction, personal recognition, experiences, know their character, etc.)

Now the Bible says that we cannot only know FACTS about God, but that Christians can KNOW God. Not just ABOUT God. But KNOW God. In fact, the normal Christian life is to be an EXPERIENTIAL relationship with him.

Handout 3 x 5 cards. As you had them out, let them know there are 2 short questions. This is anonymous so they can be honest. And, that you'll collect them just to get a feel for where the group is.

1. **What 3-5 adjectives would you say best characterize your present relationship with God? (maybe distant? non-existent? close? warm? open? estranged? Searching? Be honest . . . where are you?)**
2. **Would you say that you have ever 'known' God -- you know, not just known facts about Him, but really known God?**

Take up cards

Transition to Scripture lesson--

Jesus used many word pictures/metaphors to describe his relationship with those who believed in him -- us. These word pictures are quite powerful, and interesting, because they help us understand how HE would describe a relationship with him. Many people tend to think of Christianity as a list of "dos and don'ts" or going to church or whatever. But Jesus described being a Christian in much different terms. The Christian life centers on HIM. Not activities.

Tonight we'll look at just one metaphor Jesus used of himself -- Jesus as our shepherd . . .

Intro the passage: We'll look at John 10:1-18. Let's turn there (help people find it if they don't have a clue -- it's near the back. Matthew -- Mark -- Luke -- John, etc). Let me introduce you to the passage. In this passage Jesus calls himself the "true shepherd" and so in the beginning he contrasts a "good" or "true" shepherd with a robber, one who doesn't care for the sheep but abuses them. So verses 1-6 set up 7-18.

Then in John 10:7-18 Jesus presents himself as the true shepherd, one who does so much for his flock.

GOING DEEPER

Have a couple of people read John 10:1-18.

We aren't exactly an agrarian society today, so I don't know squat about sheep farming. But Jesus' audience knew a ton about it.

Q Turn to a couple of people next to you. Together look at verses 7-18 and find several specific things Jesus mentions regarding his relationship to his sheep. (he is the gate for the sheep, he saves the sheep, he has come to provide full life for his sheep, he lays down his life for the sheep, he will not bail out on the sheep in

trouble, he knows his sheep, he gathers his sheep, the sheep listen to him, he has authority to lay down his life for the sheep, etc.)

Let's talk about several of these:

Q Jesus refers to himself as the "good" shepherd. What, according to the text, specifically makes him "good"? (vs. 11, 14-15). (that he lays down his life for the sheep).

Q. Let's make a bizarre assumption. Pretend you are a sheep. And, on the hillside in front of you are 5 different shepherds. And you get to pick a shepherd, someone you want to follow, someone you want to call your name. What might be appealing about selecting a shepherd who would lay down his life for you?

Q. Jesus mentions that the hired hand bails out in times of trouble, to save his own neck (10:11ff.). Jesus doesn't. Why not? What does the text say?

Q. What sort of emotional response do you have when you realize that Christ will NEVER bail out on you?

Q Jesus says that his relationship with the sheep is NOT like that of a hired hand with sheep. On the other hand, he says that his relationship with the sheep is like what . . . (hint: look at verse 14-15. Jesus compares our relationship with him to his relationship to his Father.)

Q In what *specific* way does Jesus say our relationship with him is akin to his relationship with the Father? (intimacy – I know my sheep, they know me like the Father knows me and I know him)

Q All of us long for intimacy. Let's talk about it for a minute. What is so alluring about intimacy?

Q Jesus knows you like the Father knows Jesus. Does this bring comfort to you? Or fear? How does that make you feel?

Q What else do we learn about Jesus as our Shepherd from 10:18? (his authority. His willingness. The crucifixion was no accident; he stepped up because he wanted to)

Application

Q. Be honest. We're into honesty around here. Do ever think of Jesus as YOUR shepherd? Yes or no . . . feel free to tell us about your journey. Would you like to experience him as your shepherd, to be known by him? Why?

Q How does your heart respond at the thought of being one of His sheep? What, for you personally, seems appealing about following this shepherd?

Talk about your group as an honest, safe place to get to know the Shepherd. A place to MEET Christ (not just hear about him).

Remember at the start of this group we jotted down 3-5 adjectives that best describe our relationship with God?

Let me just read a few of the adjectives listed regarding how we would characterize our relationship with God (read the bleaker ones). Read a few. Note how far this is from the picture of our Shepherd that we've just looked at!

The next few weeks we're going to look at how we can know this Shepherd better – and **follow him**.

Prayer cards: Hand out another 3 x 5 card. Say something like, "I'd really like to be praying for you – specifically for each of you – that you might grow in your relationship with God. That's why we're here. That's why I'm here. That's why we have this group." So, to help me do this, I'd like for you to put your name on the card and answer a couple of questions. You can be honest.

1. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being no interest and 10 being unbridled enthusiasm, how interested are you in seeing your relationship with God develop this semester? Be real on this. If you don't give a rip, put 1 or 2. Don't put 8 and then never think about God until next week. Maybe you're just trying to figure it out . . . you're open, but confused. Put a 7 or something. Really . . . where are you on this?

2. What one specific thing can I be pray for regarding your heart relationship with God? Be specific. If you are confused, ask me to pray that God will help you with your doubts. If you wondering if all this is true, pray God will show you that it's true. If you'd like to be more intimate with God, ask me to pray for that. What one thing do you want me to pray for you regarding your relationship with God?

Announcements

Vision cast for group (I'm really excited about this group because . . .) Be sure all the details are firmed up – meeting time, place, etc.

Plug Primetime/Social

Fall conference. Have brochures. Register this week at weekly meeting. Perhaps leave time for a fall conference recruiting testimony. **THIS IS HOW I WOULD PLUG FALL RETREAT FOR THE FRESHMEN:** "The reason we have fall retreat after 3 weeks of school is for freshmen. This is the weekend when the freshmen class comes together, where the freshmen go from "hi, my name is Sam" to being really good friends. Just getting away together is so great to develop friendships, especially for freshmen just getting to know each other and the upperclassmen. It is also such a great time with the Lord. I'd love to see most of this group go up together – we could room together, so really think about it. I can assure you that when we're driving back Sunday at lunch that you'll be SO glad you came. By the way – you can study all Sat. afternoon if you want – and later in the evenings, so you can make it work with studies. Talk to any of us who have been – this is a great time!"

You close in prayer (or maybe have one of your more spiritually mature freshmen do it. Ask them ahead of time. Only ask people you trust to do something appropriate! You don't want a 10 minute diatribe)