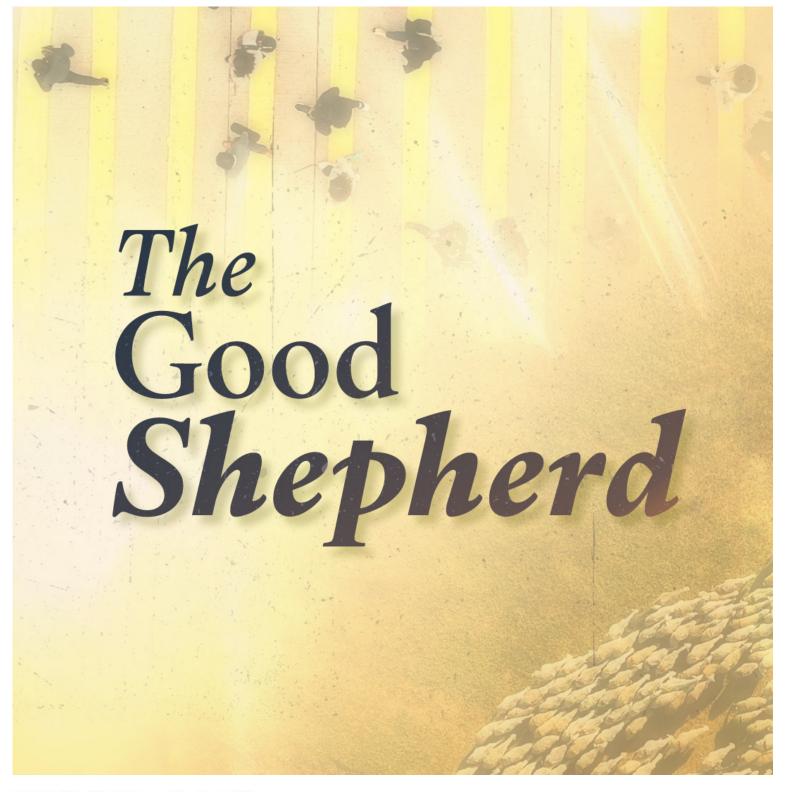
The Good Shepherd

WEEKS 1-4



WEEK ONE WATCH

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

READ

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

DISCUSS

We hope those who participate in the study walk away knowing, feeling, and doing differently as a result of amazing discussion.

The Good Shepherd

THE TRUE SHEPHERD!

BIG IDEA

One of the more common occupations we read about in the Bible is the shepherd. In fact, we find shepherds mentioned in approximately one hundred biblical passages. Many of the patriarchs in the Bible were shepherds. Even the secular leaders of the day were often referred to as shepherds. In ancient times, sheep weren't herded by sheepdogs, but they were actually led by their shepherd. The shepherds were very protective of their sheep. Often, shepherds would even name each of their sheep.

Just as the shepherd was strongly connected to his sheep, the same was true for the sheep to their shepherd. They sheep only followed the voice they recognized - their own shepherd! They were helpless without the care of their shepherd. They were dependent, unintelligent wanderers that would easily get lost if left on their own.

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The Good Shepherd

THE TRUE SHEPHERD!

As a result, the shepherd had to exhibit care
and compassion for his sheep, providing for
their needs and leading them where they
needed to go. This week, we will look at how
we are often much like sheep and need our
Good Shepherd to lead us.

p	assa	ges	we'11	review:
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Ezekiel 34:1-6; Ezekiel 34:23-25; Psalm 23; Hebrews 13:20-21

OPENING

What stood out to you from the message this week? What led you to really think? Did anything challenge you?

Who or what has had the biggest influence in your life? What guides the decisions you make, especially when under pressure?

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WEEK

The Good Shepherd

THE TRUE
SHEPHERD!

WATCH

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

What jumped out at you from the video in this session? What are some of the key points that affected you more than others?

READ

Read Ezekiel 34:1-6

Before we look at the Good Shepherd, let's take a look at the "bad" shepherds. Who were these bad shepherds, and why were they considered as such? What were the results of their bad shepherding?

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The Good Shepherd

THE TRUE SHEPHERD!

(The "bad" shepherds were those who had been leading and ruling over Israel throughout the years. They were selfish, power-seeking leaders who didn't look out for the interests of those who were under their leadership. They enjoyed the benefits of being in charge, taking from the people anything they wanted, but did not give anything back to them in return. They were not concerned with the national affairs that affected the people as a whole and didn't provide the constant care and guidance that was needed. Their decisions were selfish and unwise. As a result, the nation was defeated and the people scattered, making them completely vulnerable.)

What examples of bad shepherds have you experienced in our day? How are the "sheep" under their care affected as a result of poor shepherding?

(Open for discussion)

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WEEK

The Good Shepherd

THE TRUE SHEPHERD!

Read	Eze	kiel	34	:23-	-25

God was not taken by surprise by the state of His people. He knew what they had gone through, and He would respond to them. What was God's remedy for what His people had endured while being under the care of bad shepherds?

(He would send the Good Shepherd to watch over and care for them.)

How does the Shepherd in this passage differ from many of the other shepherds Israel had experienced?

(This Good Shepherd is Jesus! Instead of being concerned about His own affairs, the Good Shepherd would provide peace and security for them. He would deliver them from those who were taking advantage of them. He would have their best interest at heart.)

The Good Shepherd

THE TRUE SHEPHERD!

Much like the nation of Israel during the time of Ezekiel, we can find hope in this passage as well. Peace and rest were lost due to sin, but we can experience both through Christ when we allow Him to be our Good Shepherd!

Read Psalm 23

In this Psalm, David portrays God through an occupation he knew very well, a shepherd.

David had tended his father's sheep when he was a young man. He knew all about the characteristics of sheep and the care they required. He also knew the job of the shepherd and the responsibility to care for the sheep at all cost, whether protecting them from wild animals or from their own weakness and helplessness.

The Good Shepherd

THE TRUE
SHEPHERD!

When you think about sheep, what are some of their admirable qualities? What are some of the more unfavorable characteristics of sheep?

(Examples: Positive - Sheep know the voice of their shepherd. They make a connection with other sheep. They are valuable, providing wool, milk, and meat. They are innocent creatures. Negative - Sheep have no sense of direction; they are easily lost. Sheep will follow the crowd, continuing to do what those in front of them have done. They are mostly defenseless creatures, not even able to get off of their backs alone! Sheep are unable to carry heavy loads. They lack judgment, and will drink dirty water if it is around, rather than finding clean water. Sheep cannot care for themselves or tend to their own wounds as other animals can. They have poor vision and often cannot see what is ahead of them.)

The Good Shepherd

THE TRUE
SHEPHERD!

According to this Psalm, how can we find comfort in knowing that Christ is our Good Shepherd?

Shepherd, Christ (AsGood provides everything we need. He doesn't drive us forward, but He goes before us and leads us down the path He desires. He provides places and opportunities for us to rest in Him. He will work in and through us in order to bring glory to His name. He does not leave us unattended, but He is always with us, even in times where He seems silent. He does not leave us to fight alone, but He will fight for us if we trust in Him. He knows what we will face before we get there and He is prepared to help us through those experiences, as we grow closer to Him. Even when danger or death comes our way, we know that we can find safety in Him, and regardless of the outcome, we will spend eternity with Him!)

The Good Shepherd

THE TRUE SHEPHERD!

Thieves and robbers only come to steal, kill, or destroy the sheep (John 10:10). The bad shepherds only care for themselves and what they can get from the sheep. But we have the Good Shepherd, who gave His own life in order that we may have a fulfilling and abundant life in Him!

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DIGGING DEEPER

Read Hebrews 13:20-21

As we read this closing prayer, we again see the reference to Jesus Christ as our Good (Great) Shepherd. According to this passage, how should we live our lives knowing we are under the care of our Good Shepherd?

The Good Shepherd

THE TRUE
SHEPHERD!

(We should allow Him to work in us and through us to make us more like Him. He desires to equip us for whatever we may face in life, good or bad, in order that through it, we may bring glory to Him and shine His light for others to see. As our Shepherd, He will care for us, repairing our broken pieces and strengthening our weaknesses in order that we can do the work that He has called us to do.)

NOTES

How should our view of Jesus as the Good Shepherd bring about a renewed praise and worship of Him for who He is and what He does?

(Open for Discussion)

The Good Shepherd

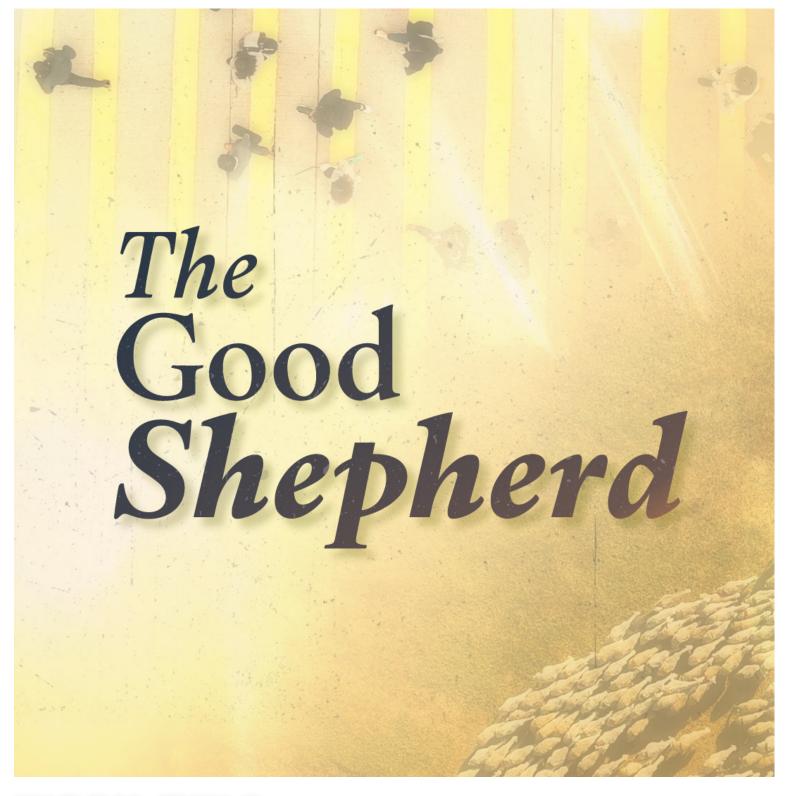
THE TRUE SHEPHERD!

PRAY

Consider the following as you pray together:

- The shepherd takes care of every need of the sheep in his care, and they trust the shepherd with their lives, following him only. What is one specific area in your life where you need to allow Jesus to be your Good Shepherd?
- Is it evident to others that Jesus is your Good Shepherd? Do your actions and your desires reflect Him at work in you?
- As we see the role of the Good Shepherd exhibited for us, we are given a model for how we should lead and care for those who are under our care. Which characteristics are most difficult for you? Pray that God will lead you to become more like the Good Shepherd as you lead those He has entrusted to you.

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WEEK TWO WATCH

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

READ

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

DISCUSS

We hope those who participate in the study walk away knowing, feeling, and doing differently as a result of amazing discussion.

THE SHEPHERD'S CONCERN FOR HIS FLOCK!

The Good Shepherd

BIG IDEA

Last week as we began our study on the Good Shepherd, we learned that the Good Shepherd cares for His flock and that His sheep trust in Him completely. This week, as we continue our study of the Good Shepherd, one particular characteristic of the Shepherd stands out: Good.

In the English language, we have many words that have multiple meanings. "Good" is one of those words. However, in the Greek language, the "good" Jesus refers to in John 10:11 means this: good, possessing moral excellence, worthy, upright, virtuous. In this verse, Jesus reminds us that the Good Shepherd lays down His life for His sheep. He paid a price that we could never pay because of His moral perfection, His holiness. But as we will see in tonight's study, we receive more than just salvation from sin as a result of His goodness. We have the promise of eternal life with Him!

THE SHEPHERD'S CONCERN FOR HIS FLOCK!

NOTES

The Good Shepherd

<u>Passages we'll review:</u>	Passages	we'11	review
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Revelation 7:9-17; Isaiah 49:8-13

OPENING

What stood out to you from the message this week? What led you to really think? Did anything challenge you?

What are some things about life on this earth that you won't miss in heaven?

WATCH

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

What jumped out at you from the video in this session? What are some of the key points that affected you more than others?

THE SHEPHERD'S CONCERN FOR HIS FLOCK!

The Good Shepherd

READ

Read Revelation 7:9-12

In this passage, we see a multitude standing before the throne of God. When we think of the sheer magnitude of the people described here, it is seemingly too many to count. But as we studied last week, we can find hope in knowing that, even in those great multitudes, our Good Shepherd knows each of us by name!

As they stood before the Lamb, they carried palm branches. This isn't the first time we have seen people standing before the Lamb of God waving palm branches! Where else have we seen this? Why is it so significant in Revelation?

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THE SHEPHERD'S CONCERN FOR HIS FLOCK!

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The Good Shepherd

(We first saw people waving palm branches and honoring Jesus during His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem (See John 12:12-19). Palm branches were used in times of joy and celebration, much like balloons in our time. The people praised Him for the miracles He had performed in their presence. In Jesus's day, many thought He was coming to be their deliverer from the governing authorities of the time. We know, however, that He is so much more than that! He is our Lord and Savior who has delivered us from the penalty of sin and has given us the hope of a future with Him in His eternal kingdom! Instead of worshiping what the people thought to be a "temporary" savior, the multitude in Revelation is worshiping our Eternal Savior and celebrating His victory over sin and death!)

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THE SHEPHERD'S CONCERN
FOR HIS FLOCK!

The Good Shepherd

Notably, verse 10 is the first time in the book of Revelation where we see words spoken by those who were redeemed in Christ! What is the significance of what they proclaimed in verse 10?

(The multitude praised God for their salvation, for the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. They understood that this salvation had nothing to do with them, but had everything to do with God! Their salvation was not only from sin, but also from the sadness, sorrow, and struggles they had faced during their time on this earth. He provided a way out!)

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THE SHEPHERD'S CONCERN FOR HIS FLOCK!

The Good Shepherd

After proclaiming their salvation, these worshipers were joined by all of the heavenly beings as they worshiped God. What attributes of God were the focus of their worship? What can we learn from their worship?

(The attributes of God that they focused on were blessing (praise), glory, wisdom, thanksgiving (thanks), honor, power, and strength. As worshipers, we are to acknowledge God for who He is and for all He has done. As we worship Him, we declare our love and devotion to Him for His greatness and His worthiness. Our worship shouldn't be something that we do only on occasion or just on Sundays at church, but our worship should be a continual response to God in everything we do. As followers of Christ, we will worship Him for all eternity!)

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THE SHEPHERD'S CONCERN FOR HIS FLOCK!

The Good Shepherd

Read Revelation 7:13-17

What was the significance of the great multitude who was robed in white standing before the throne? Why were they compelled to respond as they did?

(The great multitude was made up of those who had remained faithful to God over generations. They could personally identify with the first verse of Amazing Grace, representing those redeemed by the blood of Christ. Their robes were white because the blood of Christ removes the stain of sin and makes everything white as snow, holy and perfect, for those who follow Him. In choosing to follow Christ, they had been rejected and even persecuted here on earth because of what they stood for and for their decision to choose God over everything else. Yet, they were overcomers in Christ! On their acceptance of Him as Lord and Savior, they were given the privilege of serving God and able to stand before Him for eternity. As a result, they were joyful worshipers!)

THE SHEPHERD'S CONCERN FOR HIS FLOCK!

The Good Shepherd

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Him?							

(Open for discussion)

We can find rest in knowing that our eternity will be in His Presence! Our earthly needs will be no more. No longer will we hunger or thirst. Our Good Shepherd will satisfy us with the Bread of Life and the Living Water. We will not have need for the earthly sun because we will see the glory of the Light of the World in the Son!

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THE SHEPHERD'S CONCERN FOR HIS FLOCK!

NOTES

The Good Shepherd

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Read Isaiah 49:8-13

While this passage was written to the nation of Israel during a time of bondage, it can also give us hope for the future. We will experience struggles in our lives as well.

What can cause a person to think that God has forgotten about him? How can we try to show them otherwise?

(Open for discussion)

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THE SHEPHERD'S CONCERN FOR HIS FLOCK!

The Good Shepherd

God is the source of our salvation. He is not
surprised by anything that comes our way. He
has a plan for us even though it may not be
the plan we want or think is best. He knows
what we need so much better than we do!

What is being described in Isaiah 49:10?

(Our future heavenly home.)

Knowing that we will one day worship God for eternity, how should we live our lives now?

(We should seek to see His plan for our lives. As we face struggles or obstacles, we can pray for a willing heart to follow what He sees is best. We can also use the trials we experience to grow in Him and to encourage and draw others to Him.)

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THE SHEPHERD'S CONCERN
FOR HIS FLOCK!

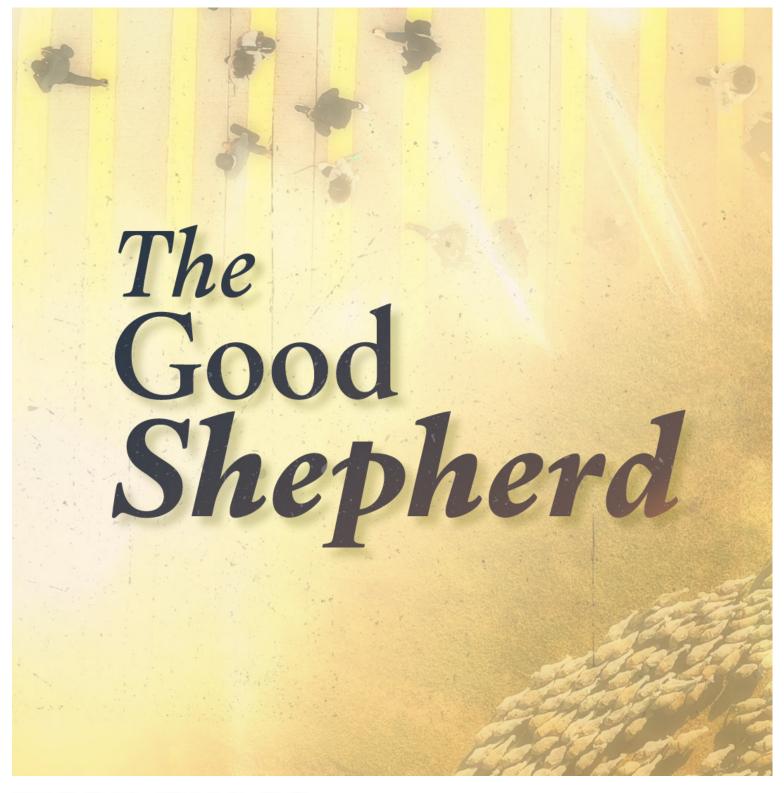
The Good Shepherd

PRAY

Consider the following as you pray together:

- As we read in Revelation 7:12, God is truly worthy of praise! What can you do this week to praise and thank God more consistently? Take time to pray about what God wants you to do.
- What has been your greatest tribulation or persecution? When you take the time to compare it to the majesty and power of God, how difficult does it actually seem? How can this perspective help you focus on worship instead of worry?
- What obstacles can keep you from sharing Christ with others? How can you combat this? Who can you share the redeeming love of Christ with this week?

"It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus. A holy minister [servant] is an awful weapon in the hand of God." ~Robert Murray McCheyne



WATCH

READ

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level. Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

DISCUSS

We hope those who participate in the study walk away knowing, feeling, and doing differently as a result of amazing discussion.

THE SHEPHERD'S
PROMISE

The Good Shepherd

BIG IDEA

The Golden Gate Bridge is one of the most photographed and possibly one of the most beautiful bridges in the world. At the time of its completion in 1937, it was the tallest and longest suspension bridge in the world. Due to the towering height of the bridge and the heavy winds often experienced in the San Francisco Bay, several workers lost their lives as they fell 200 feet to the water below. This resulted in apprehension from the workers and huge delays in the construction schedule of this massive undertaking.

As a solution to this problem, a huge safety net made of thick, sturdy manila rope was extended beneath the entire bridge. This was a first in the history of bridge construction. Because of the security offered by the netting, workmen were no longer hesitant to do their work and could work at a much faster rate.

The Good Shepherd

THE SHEPHERD'S PROMISE!

The lives saved and the increased work speed
far outweighed the cost of the netting and
resulted in completion ahead of schedule and
under budget. As Christians, we can also find
safety and security under the care of our
Good Shepherd, no matter what we may face.
He knows what is best for us and desires to
lead us down the best path.

Passage	es we'll	review:

Psalm 91:14-16; 2 Corinthians 1:20;

Habakkuk 3:17-19

OPENING

What stood out to you from the message this week? What led you to really think? Did anything challenge you?

Who is the first person you call when you have something exciting to share? Who do you call first when you are in a bind?

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The Good Shepherd

THE SHEPHERD'S PROMISE!

WATCH

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

What jumped out at you from the video in this session? What are some of the key points that impacted you more than others?

READ

Read Psalm 91:14-16

In verse 14, we see God draw attention to the one who "has his heart set on Me." What characteristics would we see in those who have their heart set on Him?

(Those who have their heart set on God truly love Him. They acknowledge Him as their Lord and Savior and seek to honor Him by living obediently to His commands and teachings. They seek to exalt Him above anything else.)

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THE SHEPHERD'S PROMISE!

The Good Shepherd

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As we read this passage, we are reminded of the greatness of the Father's love for us. As we studied last week, the sheep are devoted to their shepherd because of his sacrificial love and care for them. When we love God for who He is, not only do we experience fulfillment from that love, but we can also depend on His promises to us!

Why is there such importance placed on knowing His name?

(The good shepherd knows each of his sheep by name and the sheep know his voice. In the same way, when we know God intimately, we know His name, who He is. We know His character and His nature by the experiences we have had with Him and what we have learned through His Word.)

THE SHEPHERD'S

The Good Shepherd

God is a personal God. He doesn't want to rule from afar or just watch from a distance. He desires an intimate, personal relationship with us where we trust in Him completely!

In this Psalm, God doesn't promise to take away all of our difficulties. What can cause us to question the goodness or faithfulness of God at times? When we find ourselves in these situations, where can we be tempted to find refuge?

(When we see the tragedy, trials, destruction, and hurt in the world around us, it can be easy to lose our focus. When times are difficult, we may become buried in our own problems and miss the presence of God. We are often tempted to find refuge or relief in other people, in self-gratification, in drugs or alcohol, burying ourselves in a job, or trying to disconnect through other forms of entertainment.)

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THE SHEPHERD'S PROMISE!

The Good Shepherd

How can we avoid falling into the traps of this world and protect ourselves from the dangers that come from focusing on the world around us?

(Much like in the construction of the Golden Gate Bridge, God provides us with protection as we go through this life. We are not promised an easy life, but because of His faithfulness, we can trust in His promises to guide and protect us as we go through this life. He will help us through the difficult times and give us guidance as we seek His will. We just have to choose Him above all else!)

Is God's favor shown through material or spiritual blessings? Explain.

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THE SHEPHERD'S PROMISE!

The Good Shepherd

(While God does often give us blessings in the material, physical realm, we know that it will not always be that way. There are times when tragedy and difficulty will still prevail. However, we know that we can find purpose and fulfillment in Him when we are living obediently to His Word. We also have the promise of our eternal future with Him! While we may face tragedy, persecution, or even death, we know that He has overcome the world! Our spiritual blessings can give us hope and strength in our current time for whatever we face, and we can look forward to being in His presence for eternity as His children!)

John Piper states: "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him." Do you agree with this statement? Explain.

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The Good Shepherd

THE SHEPHERD'S PROMISE!

(Only God can give us true fulfillment and satisfaction. This world tries to offer much to us, but none of it satisfies our deepest needs. We only truly worship or glorify the things that we enjoy. He knows us better than anyone else. He designed us each with a purpose to serve and honor Him. Only by trusting in Him completely and living in a manner that brings glory to Him will we find true fulfillment and satisfaction!)

What better example do we have to follow than Jesus Himself? Everything He did during His time on earth from His birth, throughout His life, and even on the cross, was done in order to bring glory to God! Only He can give us what truly satisfies all of our desires. When we serve Him as we were created to and find our joy in Him, His glory is able to shine through us as we share that joy with others!

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THE SHEPHERD'S PROMISE!

The Good Shepherd

DIGGING DEEPER

Read Habakkuk 3:17-19

We find Habakkuk in the middle of a very difficult situation. He knows that his homeland will be invaded and overtaken by the enemy and the land destroyed. Everything that was viewed as a sign of security, strength, and happiness was gone. In man's eyes, it would seem that all was lost. And yet, Habakkuk still had faith in God!

How could Habakkuk have so much faith and joy given the crisis he was facing?

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WEEK THREE THE SHEPHERD'S PROMISE!

The Good Shepherd

(Habakkuk knew that God was greater than
anything he would encounter here on earth. He
had experienced God for who He was, and he
knew that nothing could compare to His
greatness and glory. Because of this, he had
grown closer to God and had developed a trust in
God that would help him through the difficult
times. In worshiping God first, Habakkuk was
able to look beyond the circumstances and focus
on God alone!)

How can this apply to followers of Christ today?

(We are reminded that God is not only our salvation, but He is also our strength. Like Habakkuk, we will also face difficult times if we are following Him, but we can find hope and strength in Him. We don't need to be afraid. God knows us intimately. We can go to Him in our times of doubt, uncertainty, and pain. He will comfort us and, in the process, help us to learn from and understand Him more.)

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WEEK THREE THE SHEPHERD'S

PROMISE

The Good Shepherd

J.I. Packer wrote, "The truest expression of trust in a great God will always be worship." In the midst of everything he was facing, Habakkuk chose to worship God. Worship brings us joy even in the most dire circumstances. Worship gives us the strength we need to face each day. When we can focus on who God is and what He has done, we gain a new perspective. While God may not always change our circumstances, He can change us and how we see those circumstances and our lives will be forever changed!

PRAY

Consider the following as you pray together:

• Have you placed all of your faith and trust in God alone? Or are you looking to other things to help sustain you? We can't do both! What do you need to release in your life so that you can hold on more tightly to God as your source of strength?

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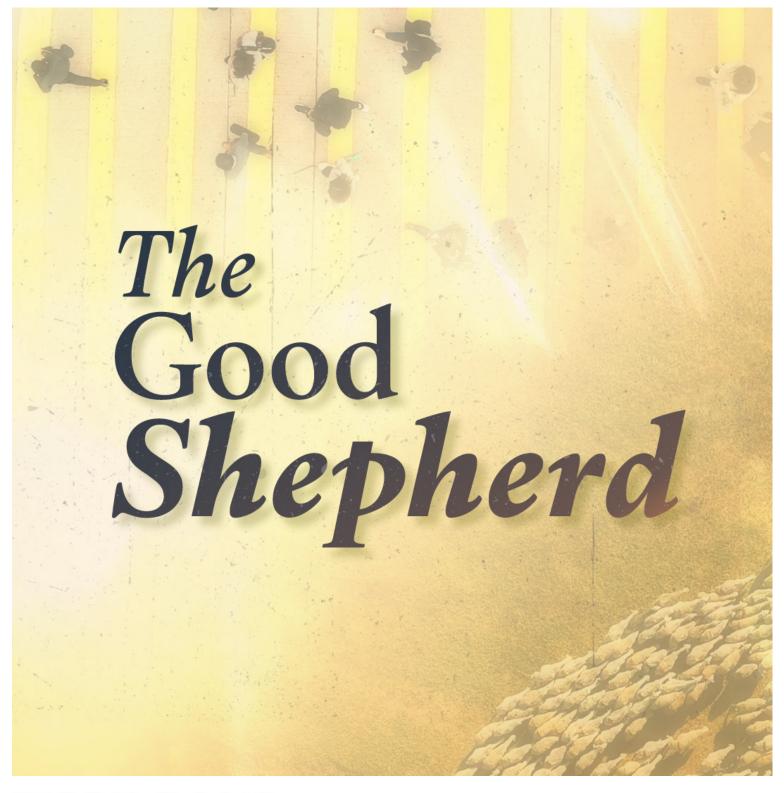
WEEK THREE THE SHEPHERD'S

The Good Shepherd

- Like Habakkuk, we must be willing to follow God's plan, even when it may not make sense to us. This requires a continual growth in our relationship with Him. How does He want you to grow in your relationship with Him?
- As we rely on the strength and provision of the Good Shepherd, we can serve Him obediently in our daily lives. What is He leading you to do that may require more faith and trust in Him? Remember that He is our source of strength. Don't be afraid to step out in faith and allow Him to be glorified through your life!

"Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger men [and women]! Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers. Pray for powers equal to your tasks. Then the doing of your work shall be no miracle. But you shall be a miracle. Every day you shall wonder at yourself, at the richness of life which has come to you by the grace of God." ~Phillips Brooks

NOTES		



WATCH

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

READ

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

DISCUSS

We hope those who participate in the study walk away knowing, feeling, and doing differently as a result of amazing discussion.

The Good Shepherd

THE SHEPHERD'S CHALLENGE

BIG IDEA

As followers of Christ, we are to be a light to the world around us, but the light that shines from us is not our own. We are much like the moon, simply a reflection of the Light of the World! In a dark night's sky, the moon lights up the night so that we can see, but it has no light of its own. It merely reflects the light of the sun. In all of its brightness, however, the moon only reflects about 12% of the sun's light! The rest is absorbed by the moon itself. The moon shines its brightest when it is a full 180 degrees across from the sun. At this point, we see the full moon. But as the moon repositions and the portion we see faces away from the sun, we see less and less of the light, until it is all hidden.

Just like the moon, we have no light of our own to reflect. When we are focused fully on the Son, He is most glorified as we reflect Him fully to the world around us.

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The Good Shepherd

THE SHEPHERD'S
CHALLENGE!

Also like the moon, we don't reflect all of the light; we absorb some of His light ourselves! The remainder is reflected towards those who live in darkness. When we turn away from Him and allow the things of this world to distract our focus, our light is blocked by those distractions, and we are not able to shine as brightly. The more that we allow to come between us and God, the less light we are able to reflect and the darker the world around us becomes. As we live out our lives on this earth, we are called to keep our focus on Him so that others can see His reflection in us and experience His light directly for themselves!

Passages	we'11	review:

Matthew 5:14-16; James 2:14-17; Psalm 27

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The Good Shepherd

THE SHEPHERD'S CHALLENGE!

OPENING

What stood out to you from the message this week? What led you to really think? Did anything challenge you?

Were you afraid of the dark as a kid? What made it so scary? What helped you to not be afraid?

WATCH

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

What jumped out at you from the video in this session? What are some of the key points that impacted you more than others?

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The Good Shepherd

THE SHEPHERD'S CHALLENGE!

READ

Read Matthew 5:14-15

How is light an essential part of our physical lives? Give examples.

(Light is essential for our life. Light is a necessary element for the food we eat. It is essential to helping produce the air we breathe through photosynthesis. It is also a necessary element in our body's biological processes as well as our mental and emotional well-being. It is a source of Vitamin D, a necessary element in our body's function. In fact, light is such an essential part of our survival that it was God's very first creation (Genesis 1:1-5)! Light is also necessary for our daily lives, as we couldn't live, work, or play without the light of day. We couldn't live without the warmth provided from the light of the sun.)

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The Good Shepherd

THE SHEPHERD'S
CHALLENGE!

Jesus regularly taught in parables, using things from everyday life to reveal more profound, spiritual truths. This is true in this teaching as well! How is the Light in this passage essential to our spiritual lives?

(Just as physical light removes the darkness, or absence of light, the spiritual light exposes and removes the darkness that comes from sin in the world around us. Light wakes us up from the sleepiness and malaise that can overtake us when we focus too much on the world. It provides warmth to the hearts of those who are hurting. Just as street lights light the roadways and security lights discourage crime, this spiritual light guides our path and leads us to the truth of God's word.)

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CHALLENGE!

What evidence of darkness do you see in the world around us?

(Open for Discussion)

When the lamp is covered by the basket (verse 15), the light becomes hidden from those who need it. What are some things that can hide or overshadow our light?

(Examples: Our own interests, other people's opinions, fear of persecution or ridicule, regret, past hurts, embarrassment, selfishness, stubbornness, running from God, inconvenience, etc.)

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CHALLENGE!

Light is simply the absence of darkness. It is visible to everyone around it. Even when small and faint, it stands out in an otherwise dark night. In the same way, we are to be distinct and noticeable to those who live in the darkness of this world, revealing the true Light of the World!

What do you think most followers of Christ would say their primary purpose in life is? Is it evident in their lives day in and day out? What are some practical ways you can be a light to those you encounter as you go through this journey of life?

(Open for Discussion)

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As we follow the example Christ set for us, we must remember that it is our responsibility to share His light with those around us and make an impact for His sake. He has called <u>each of us</u> to be the light in our world, not just our pastors or our church as a whole!

Read	Matthew	5:16

How does this verse challenge us in our actions and decisions?

(Just as the moonlight is simply a reflection of the light of the sun, we are to be a reflection of the character and nature of Jesus Christ. We are not to act on behalf of our own reputation or advantage, but in a way that will make Him known! We must remember that we are not of this world, but we represent His kingdom! Our lives should be lived in a way that brings praise and glory to Him alone!)

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Read]	ames	2:14-17

What is the relationship between our faith and our works?

(A "dead" faith is only an intellectual experience. It has head knowledge, but does nothing to change the heart of the one involved; they continue living life the same. James teaches us that "living" faith goes beyond just a belief system; it extends beyond our head knowledge to the overflow of our heart as we express care and concern for those around us.)

As we reach out to those who don't know Christ, why is it important to have works that demonstrate the faith we profess?

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(When we truly encounter Christ, we can never be the same; we experience a life-changing salvation! As our faith in Christ grows, He brings about new life in us, which produces spiritual growth and leads us to bear fruit that resembles Him. As a result, we must show them a new way. We must go beyond talking the talk, and we must walk the walk that gives credibility to the Truth we profess and the God we represent. Otherwise, we are no different from the world in which we live.)

DIGGING DEEPER

Read Psalm 27

There will be many things in this life that seek to block our light and discourage us from being obedient in all that Christ commanded us to do. But this is not a new struggle. Even David experienced this as he was under persecution. He had been chosen by God as the next king of Israel. Because of this, he was in great danger as Saul sought to overtake him.

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CHALLENGE!

What was the significance of David recognizing God as his light?

(David knew that God was his guide through life. God was on his side and would drive away the darkness that came from those who sought to kill him. Even when he felt overwhelmed and couldn't understand the circumstances, God was his source of strength and revealed the steps he should take. God was his protection and source of life. God could heal wounds that were caused by the hearts of men and would transform David into the person He desired him to be.)

What did David want above everything else? Why is this important?

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(More than anything, David wanted to dwell in God's presence, worshiping Him and experiencing God for all He is. Just as light dispels the darkness, when we direct our focus to the One True God, everything else pales in comparison. We are no longer left to fight on our own, but we have His strength when we are weak. He is our salvation, defeating sin and death. By focusing on Him, we are able to adjust our perspective to see what He can do in and through us.)

The key to David's hope and confidence was his personal relationship with God. He knew that God was stronger than any enemy that would come against him. God was all he needed! We, too, can find strength in the Lord in every situation. We can share this hope with others as we reflect His light to them in every circumstance.

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PRAY

Following Christ isn't easy. In a world that doesn't honor and worship God, His followers will face difficulties. When we choose to live in the light as He has called us to live, we can expect persecution. However, we can follow the example Christ set for us as we live for Him, giving light and hope to those around us. The eternal rewards will far outweigh the cost!

Consider the following as you pray together:

• Does your relationship with Christ set you apart from the world around you? When people look at your life, do they notice that you are different from the standards and values of others? Is there anything in your life that is contagious, that they see and want to know more about?

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CHALLENGE!

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- Where has God placed you right now?
 What example do you set for those in that place? Do your "good works" lead others to give glory to God or to you?
- Make a list of those God has called you to be a light to. What are specific ways that you can reflect the light of Christ on them?

"We are philosophers not in words, but in deeds; we know virtues by their practice rather than through boasting of them; we do not speak great things but we live them." (Cyprian of Carthage)

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