

Small Group Guide: The Good Shepherd and God's Promise to Israel

Ezekiel 33-34



Summary:

In Ezekiel 33 and 34, we're challenged to consider our role as spiritual watchmen. Just as ancient cities relied on watchmen to warn of impending danger, we too are called to sound the alarm about the consequences of sin. This isn't about judgment, but about love - sharing the life-saving message of the Gospel. We're reminded that our past righteousness doesn't negate present sin, nor does past wickedness prevent future redemption. God's justice is perfect, and His grace is abundant. As we reflect on this, let's ask ourselves: Are we fulfilling our duty to lovingly warn others? Are we living in a way that truly reflects our faith? This message urges us to examine our hearts and actions, ensuring we're not just giving lip service to God, but truly living out His commands.

Key Takeaways:

1. God holds leaders accountable for how they guide and care for His people.
2. Our past righteousness doesn't negate current sin, but genuine repentance can lead to forgiveness.
3. God promises to personally gather and restore His people Israel in the future.
4. Jesus fulfills the role of the Good Shepherd, in contrast to failed human leaders.
5. There are parallels between God's promises and the Antichrist's deceptions, but only God can truly fulfill His word.

Discussion Questions:

1. How does Ezekiel's role as a "watchman" relate to our responsibility as Christians to share the Gospel? What challenges do we face in fulfilling this role?
2. The sermon mentions that "your righteous works don't save you because of the sin in your life." How does this align with the New Testament teaching on salvation by faith? How might this challenge common misconceptions about salvation?
3. In what ways do you see modern leaders (political, religious, or cultural) acting like the "bad shepherds" described in Ezekiel 34? What can we learn from this critique?
4. How does Jesus' description of Himself as the Good Shepherd in John 10 contrast with the failed leaders in Ezekiel? What qualities make Jesus the perfect shepherd?
5. The sermon discusses God's future plans for Israel. How does this prophecy impact your understanding of God's faithfulness to His promises?
6. What similarities and differences do you notice between the promises of God and the deceptions of the Antichrist described in the sermon? How can we discern truth from counterfeit in our own lives?

Practical Applications:

1. Reflect on your own leadership roles (at home, work, church, etc.). How can you embody the qualities of a good shepherd this week?
2. Practice sharing your faith with someone this week, remembering your role as a "watchman" with the life-saving message of the Gospel.
3. Spend time in prayer, thanking God for His faithfulness to His promises and asking for discernment to recognize truth in a world of deception.
4. Study Jesus' teachings about being the Good Shepherd in John 10. How can you better follow His voice and guidance in your daily life?
5. If you're in a position of influence, consider how you can use that role to serve and care for others rather than for personal gain.
6. Reflect on areas where you might be relying on past "good deeds" rather than maintaining a current, vibrant relationship with God. Take steps to address any complacency.

5-day Bible reading plan and devotional guide:



Day 1: The Watchman's Call

Reading: Ezekiel 33:1-9

Devotional:

God appointed Ezekiel as a watchman for Israel, tasked with warning the people of impending danger. This role parallels our calling as Christians to share the gospel. Just as Ezekiel was held responsible for delivering God's message, we too are accountable for sharing the good news of salvation through Christ. Reflect on your own life - are you faithfully sounding the alarm of God's truth to those around you? Consider how you can be more intentional in sharing your faith, remembering that the eternal destinies of others may depend on your willingness to speak up.

Day 2: God's Heart for Repentance

Reading: Ezekiel 33:10-20

Devotional:

These verses reveal God's deep desire for people to turn from their wickedness and live. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked but longs for their repentance. This mirrors the heart of Jesus, who came to seek and save the lost. As you meditate on God's mercy, consider areas in your own life where you need to repent. Thank God for His grace that covers all sin, and pray for those you know who are far from Him. How can you demonstrate God's heart for repentance in your interactions with others today?

Day 3: The True Shepherd

Reading: Ezekiel 34:11-16, John 10:11-18

Devotional:

Ezekiel prophesies about God Himself becoming the shepherd of His people, seeking out the lost and bringing them back to the fold. This beautiful imagery is fulfilled in Jesus, who declares Himself the Good Shepherd. Unlike the false shepherds who exploit the flock, Jesus lays down His life for His sheep. Reflect on how Jesus has sought you out and cared for you personally. How does knowing you are cherished by the Good Shepherd impact your sense of security and purpose? Consider how you can extend Christ-like care to someone in need today.

Day 4: The Promise of Restoration

Reading: Ezekiel 34:25-31

Devotional:

God promises a future of peace, safety, and abundance for His people. While this prophecy has implications for Israel, it also points to the ultimate restoration that will come when Christ returns. As believers, we live in the tension of "already, but not yet" - experiencing a foretaste of God's kingdom while awaiting its full realization. How does the promise of future restoration give you hope in your current circumstances? Pray for God's kingdom to come in fuller measure, both in your life and in the world around you.

Day 5: The Judgment of the Sheep and Goats

Reading: Ezekiel 34:17-24, Matthew 25:31-46

Devotional:

Both Ezekiel and Jesus speak of a time when God will judge between the sheep and the goats - separating those who truly belong to Him from those who don't. This sobering reality reminds us of the importance of genuine faith that produces good fruit. Examine your own life - does your faith express itself in love and service to others, especially the vulnerable? Ask God to reveal any areas where you've been indifferent to the needs around you. Commit to living in a way that reflects your identity as one of Christ's sheep, responding to His love by loving others.