

The Good Shepherd



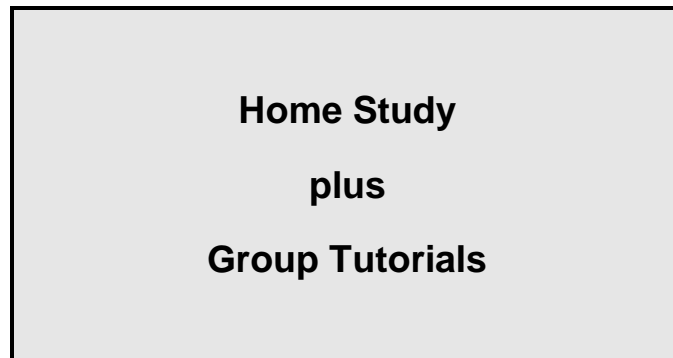
Foundations

A Sample Lesson From:
Discover Life
A Study of the Gospel of John

An Open Learning Course from  Trinity College Bristol

Introduction

Our Open Learning courses are designed to help you learn by means of:



Home Study

Each Block has **four sessions**. For convenience, each of these sessions has been broken down into two **lessons** so that, if you have about $\frac{3}{4}$ hr to spare (very roughly), you can complete one lesson. These lessons require you to read and interact with the course material as well as with your Bible.

The sample lesson is **programmed** to help you check your progress as you work through. To get the maximum benefit it is important that you use the course in the way it that was intended:

1. Read section 1 (often referred to by the technical term 'frame' 1).
2. Make the response required, if there is one.
3. Check that your answer corresponds with the feedback given in the 'feedback' section at the end. (Wherever feedback is given, it is marked with a raven).
4. Proceed to section 2.

Note that the **course** is programmed—**you** are **not** being programmed! The aim of programming is that:

1. you can check frequently that you have understood the material presented;
2. you are stimulated to active and critical thinking;
3. you reinforce what you learn and are better able to remember it.

Sometimes, discussion frames are given. These are clearly indicated by a heading 'For Discussion' and box. Here you should answer the question in your words and come to the tutorial prepared to discuss the question as indicated.

At the end of each lesson, we encourage you to spend some time in reflection on how what you have learnt applies to you in the situation where God has placed you.

Group Meeting

At the end of each block of home study, you will meet in your tutorial group where you will have the opportunity to discuss points of interest that have arisen and think through with others how your learning may be applied. You will also normally be given a five-minute quiz.

The group tutorials give the opportunity for you to clarify ideas and to share your own thoughts and to listen to the ideas of others. The process of learning from the Bible in a group is an essential part of the programme. It is here that you are able to think through areas of application and to pray and support each other in your studies.

Themes of St John's Gospel: The Good Shepherd

block 5 session 1 lesson b

Preparing for today's lesson:

- Take a moment to pray that you will understand more about Jesus' role as good shepherd as a result of this lesson.
- Remember to keep a notebook handy to note down any questions or issues for discussion.

Objectives

At the end of this lesson you will be able to:

- prepare an outline talk on 'John 10: the Good Shepherd.'

1.

Activity:

Before we start today's lesson, take time to re-read John 10:1-30.

2. Let us now consider just one theme that is prominent in John's Gospel: Jesus as shepherd. According to John 10, what are the functions of a shepherd who is doing his job properly?




3. The idea of a shepherd laying down his life for the sheep is an unusual one. In the Old Testament the shepherd is usually thought of as the king or leader, a position of power and influence. There is implied responsibility but not necessarily self-sacrifice. The exception is Zechariah 13:7 and it is significant that that is the verse quoted in Matthew 26:31 about the death of the Lord Jesus. Now have a look at


Hebrews 13:20. There the Lord Jesus is referred to as 'the great shepherd'.

But the verse as a whole refers to Jesus' _____ . 

4. In Rev 7:17 we have another reference to the shepherd in the remarkable statement that 'the Lamb ... will be their shepherd'! In Revelation the Lamb is the Lamb 'looking as if it had been slain' (5:6).

In all these references, the idea of Jesus as shepherd is therefore connected with the idea of the _____ of Jesus. 

5. It looks as if the idea of Jesus as the Shepherd is connected in the New Testament with the idea of the shepherd who gives up his life for the flock. There may be another example in 1 Peter 2:24f. This shows that the New Testament has remarkable unity as well as diversity. Here are a couple of statements. What do you think of them?


- The different New Testament writers all treat the great themes of the Gospel in the same way.
 - There is no connection between the way that different New Testament authors treat the same theme.
- 

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6. In the past many scholars took the approach that the distinctive way in which a particular author presented the truth was relatively unimportant; differences were minimised as in the elaborate attempts to harmonise the Gospel accounts. As a boy I had a Bible which included notes on the gospels and amongst these was a most complicated reworking of the various accounts of the resurrection to make them all fit in together. The trouble was that we tended to read this instead of the accounts as written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

For Discussion

What do you think was lost in the process? Jot down any further comments:




7. On the other hand the differences between authors can be emphasised too much, so that useful and fruitful connections between similar themes used by different authors are ignored. Obviously the New Testament writers to some extent shared similar experiences and backgrounds and had a similar world view. What source of information did *all* the New Testament writers make use of? _____ 

8. What does all this mean when we come to use the biblical material? Imagine you are asked to prepare a talk on John chapter 10, and the heading for your talk is 'Jesus, the Good Shepherd'. Notice that you have been given two constants in your equation, so to speak, which are?



9. One of my nightmares is to be given a text and title which don't match each other. Fortunately they do match up here. How would you start? Here are two suggestions. Choose one, or give your own alternative.

- a. See what the text says about 'the good shepherd'.
- b. Think about what makes a good shepherd these days (so as to make the talk relevant) and then see what the text has to say about your thoughts.
- c. Your alternative _____ 

10. Next, we would suggest you make an initial outline for the talk. Begin by writing down a series of subheadings for your outline (I have four).




11. This might be enough. You could certainly give a talk based on that outline and on John 10 alone. Nevertheless, I think it might be worth asking the following questions as part of your talk preparation, even if you did not feel that they were all worth answering in detail.

What is the context of John 10? Why did Jesus suddenly start talking about shepherds and sheep? How does this discourse fit in with the rest of the gospel?


What is the background of John's thought? Does he use the idea of Jesus as shepherd elsewhere in the gospel? Are there any obvious sources of his imagery, e.g. in the Old Testament?

Is the idea used elsewhere in the New Testament? In what way?

To answer these questions fully would entail a good deal of work, and I am not suggesting that you try to answer them all now. (Mind you, if you actually give the talk, it might be different.) Preparation for talks and sermons is an exacting business (when done properly). The man who taught me how to preach reckoned that he spent 10-12 hours preparing a sermon, without any coffee breaks! [Editor's note: Gulp!] Well, you do have time to attempt the first question about the context of John 10. See how you get on.



12. What about Old Testament sources? My Bible has these Old Testament references against the word 'shepherd': Psalm 23:1, Isaiah 40:11, Ezekiel 34:11-16, 23. Would these be useful to your talk? Do they tell you anything you did not know or something which you might want to follow up further? Jot down any relevant ideas.



13. We have already been through the other major New Testament references to Jesus as the shepherd (see frames 3-5). Would they add anything to your talk? Think about that and then rewrite your outline in the light of these additional considerations. To show I am not cheating, I will do the same.



14. This ought to be a very sound talk. Whether it is interesting or not is another matter.

For Discussion

What still needs to be done is to ask how these things would be relevant to you and the group you are speaking to. So do these final two stages:

- a. Consider your own situation (i.e., the situation in which you are giving the talk). This means understanding the situation of the group you are speaking to (potentially very difficult if you don't know them).

- b. Bring together the Bible and the situation of the group.

d. Review

15. Finally¹:

On a separate piece of paper, make a table showing the connection between the signs, the discourse material and 'I am' sayings. Use the Bible. Don't be concerned to reproduce the table in session 1a but do something that *you* believe to be accurate and helpful.

Write down four themes found in all the main New Testament writings, two themes found in the Johannine writings only, and three themes found only in John's Gospel.

¹ The first part of this review frame can only be done by those who have studied the previous lesson of the course.

New Testament Themes _____

Themes in Johannine Writings _____

Themes in John's Gospel _____

Reflecting on Today's Lesson

Note down in your notebook anything from today's lesson:

- that you want to discuss in your tutorial;
- that is significant for your own personal faith;
- that is significant for explaining the Gospel to others.

Spend some time in prayer asking God to help you apply what you have learnt.

Pray for an opportunity to make use of your notes on the Good Shepherd and be prepared to share this in your tutorial.


Feedback: The Good Shepherd
block 5 session 1b

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- 1b.2 *A good shepherd knows his sheep, leads them to pasture, keeps them safe, does not run away, and finally lays down his life for the sheep.*
-
- 1b.3 *death*
-
- 1b.4 *death*
-
- 1b.5 *They are both wrong. Read on.*
-
- 1b.6 *The particular truths that each Gospel writer wanted to bring out in his account, or words to that effect.*
-
- 1b.7 *The Old Testament.*
-
- 1b.8 *a passage (Jn 10) and a particular theme*
-
- 1b.9 *Your answer. I should say a., since with b. you run the risk of imposing your own ideas on the text. However, it's good to try and be relevant.*
-
- 1b.10 *The shepherd knows his sheep
The shepherd feeds his sheep
The shepherd protects his sheep
The shepherd lays down his life for the sheep*
-
- 1b.11 *This is not an entirely unfamiliar question. The false shepherds appear to be the Pharisees of chapter 9. (See **Block 2 Frame 3a.10**)*
-
- 1b.13 *Here is my version.*
Jesus The Good Shepherd
 1 *The ideal of the shepherd-king in the Old Testament*
 a. *Yahweh as shepherd of his people*
 b. *Yahweh's under-shepherds*
 c. *Shepherds good and bad*
 2. *Jesus as the good shepherd*
 a. *The man born blind and the false shepherds*
 b. *The shepherd at work: knowing, caring, protecting*
 3. *The shepherd who gives his life*
 a. *The picture in John 10*
 b. *Other New Testament references*
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This study forms part of an Open Learning programme based on local study groups for anyone who:

- wishes to grow in knowledge of God and understanding of the Christian faith;
- is committed to systematic, disciplined and in-depth personal study;
- is ready to learn from others in small discussion groups;
- is willing to make use of God-given gifts for mission and ministry in the local church.

The programme is designed to be accessible to those who have no previous theological study as well as to those who want to engage with the Bible at a deeper level. The courses are suitable for those who feel called to involvement in different avenues of ministry and mission in the local church as well as those who want to work out how to live more effectively as Christians in daily life whether at home or in workplace and society.

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