



That You May
HAVE LIFE

A STUDY ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

women's
BIBLE STUDY



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LESSON *Eight*

The Good Shepherd

As chapter 9 opens, Jesus showed His power over disease by healing a man blind from birth. He then explained His relationship to the people He came to save as a Shepherd to their flock. Jesus will care for and protect His people, no matter the cost. This section then ends with the Jews ready to stone Jesus for blasphemy: He has claimed that He and God the Father are one.

PHARISEES

Notice in this story that the Pharisees only cared about Jesus breaking the law, not that a life changing miracle had taken place. This theme continues to develop throughout the book of John, ultimately leading to Jesus' death on a cross.

Read John 9-10 before answering the following questions.

1. Where do you see Jesus' love, compassion, and grace in these chapters? (Be sure to include the verse references.) Do you believe Jesus always acts this way toward you? Explain.

Read John 9:1-41.

2. When Jesus encountered a man born blind, what question did His disciples ask? Summarize Jesus' response.

Question:

Jesus' Response:

3. The healing of the man's sight, both physically and spiritually, is another one of Jesus' signs. While this man's situation was unique, how does Jesus' answer in verse 3 reveal how God might work in the midst of suffering?

Where else have you seen God work through suffering in Scripture?
What disadvantage or hardship do you have in your life that God can use for His glory?

4. Explain Jesus' interaction with the blind man. How did the Pharisees go about investigating this miracle?
5. Consider the blind man's testimony: "One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." From verses 39-41, explain the connection Jesus made between his healing and the spiritually blind:

Read John 10:1-21.

6. This passage gives one of the most beautiful descriptions of Jesus found in the Gospels. Read it slowly. What are the two "I am" statements found in this section? Write down what you learn about Jesus as Shepherd and His relationship to His sheep.

LIGHT OF THE WORLD

It is not coincidence that Jesus just claimed to be the light of the world (John 8:12) and the next miracle you read about is a man gaining his sight for the very first time.

SLOW DOWN

Don't read through the story so quickly that you miss that this was a real man who suffered for many years whose life was forever changed by his encounter with Jesus.

VERSE 39

Verse 39 might appear to contradict passages you have already read like John 3:17. However, Jesus is not talking about condemnation here. Instead, Jesus is saying that His presence and ministry causes people to either believe in Him or be against Him.³⁸

SHEPHERDS

In His teaching, Jesus used imagery with which His audience would be familiar. In this case, He speaks of shepherding the flocks. Also, in the Old Testament, God was called the Shepherd of Israel (Psalm 23:1, 80:1, Ezekiel 34, etc.).

SHEEPFOLD

"The sheepfold was commonly a courtyard near or beside a house and bordered by a stone wall, in which one or several families kept their sheep."³⁹

PSALM 16

“You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” Psalm 16:11

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

Don't forget the Scripture memory cards in the back of the curriculum. Challenge yourself this week to memorize one of the “I Am” statements. You will never regret spending time hiding God's Word in your heart!

SACRIFICE

In verse 11, Jesus says He will lay His life down for His sheep. Though no one understood it then, Jesus was hinting at His coming sacrifice where He would die for the sins of the world.

7. John 10:10 says, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” Read Psalm 23 below, circling the aspects of the abundant life God offers you every day:

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.”

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil, for you are with me;

your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”

“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”

Which phrases stand out to you and why? Considering John 10 and Psalm 23, which aspects of abundant life with Christ do you desire to more fully experience?

“What matters supremely, therefore, is not, in the last analysis, the fact that I know God, but the larger fact which underlies it—the fact that he knows me. I am graven on the palms of his hands. I am never out of his mind....He knows me as a friend, one who loves me; and there is no moment when his eye is off me, or his attention distracted from me, and no moment, therefore, when his care falters.”

—J.I. Packer⁴⁰

8. Oftentimes believers do not live in the abundance that Jesus offers. Instead, we are consumed with other things like fear, busyness, sin, or empty religious rituals. Believers can even be consumed or distracted with seemingly good things. Take a minute to pray. Thank God for His love, care, and grace. Ask Him to reveal where you might be struggling to fully live in the abundant life He offers. How might you develop greater intimacy with Jesus? What does it look like to surrender more of your life to the Holy Spirit? Write any reflections you have below.

9. Describe the divided opinions about Jesus in John 9:16 and 10:19-21. What are some of the divided opinions about Jesus today?

Read John 10:22-41.

10. List the claims Jesus made about Himself and His relationship with God in this section:
11. Why were the Pharisees struggling with Jesus' claims? Considering Deuteronomy 6:4, were they wrong to question Him? (See Appendix: Trinity)
12. Is it possible to lose your salvation if you have truly trusted in Jesus? Use Scripture from this passage to support your answer. How does this passage reassure someone who is concerned about losing their salvation? (See Appendix: Assurance of Salvation)

MISUNDERSTANDING

Take a minute to consider the many ways people misunderstand what it means to have an "abundant life" in Jesus. Ask God to reveal where you are misunderstanding and to guide you in His truth.

THE ENEMY

The enemy is a liar, thief, and seeks to harm those who follow Jesus. 1 Peter 5:8 says, "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." But believers are not helpless against his schemes! James 4:7 says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

FEASTS

The Feast of Dedication is not in the Old Testament and was only recently established in Jesus' day. It celebrated the reinstitution of the Jewish Temple after it was defiled by governmental rulers, a celebration known today as Hanukkah.⁴¹

BLASPHEMY

Blasphemy means "to speak harm." More specifically, it is "the act of claiming the attributes of a deity" or a "lack of reverence for God."⁴²

PRAY

Stop and ask the Holy Spirit to give you opportunities this week to engage with nonbelievers.

13. Take a step back and look at the big picture. Chapter after chapter, Jesus has been patient with the Pharisees, answering their questions of His authority and engaging with their many disputes. Today, as you engage with people who do not believe in Jesus, what can you model from Jesus' example?

Read Laura's story on pages 82-83 about the abundant life God offers.

BIG IDEA

What is your biggest takeaway from this week's lesson?

Review: Jesus' Seven I Am Statements

I am the _____ of _____. (John 6:35, 48)

I am the _____ of the _____. (John 8:12)

I am the _____ of the _____. (John 10:7)

I am the _____. (John 10:11, 14)

Notes

Testimony

“It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.” John 9:3

It was the summer of 2003. “Have you considered having an abortion?” The question hung in the air as I ended the phone call. Instantly, tears began to flow again. This was not the first time the question had been asked of me. Preoccupied with the child that was growing inside me, it became hard to think of anything else. Just weeks earlier while sitting in that small dark exam room, the ultrasound screen as bright as the sun but only bearing bad news, my husband and I heard the grave words: “I am very concerned about this baby.” The sonogram showed what we never imagined would be the case. Our child would be born severely disabled. At that time, we were told he might not even live. Devastation ruled my heart. My hopes and desires felt crushed, and I was overwhelmed with grief.

Most days I wish for a different story for my 17-year-old son. My flesh longs for ease for him, for the ability to do and be like other young men his age. And honestly? I long for comfort for myself. I dream of physical ease, financial burdens lifted, days free from anxiety and depression. I long to be free from the challenges that come with parenting a child with physical differences. I long for things to be normal. I frequently find myself questioning God... Why my son? Why our family? But since the beginning, God has had a different plan for us. Our family would look different. Motherhood would look different. I have had to repeatedly make a choice: do I fight God’s plan, or do I embrace it?

We all face this decision in some area of our lives. While we’d like to think that our circumstances make us unique and give us license to wring our hands at God, in reality we just aren’t that different. We all face the same choices. Scripture tells us, promises us even, that life as a follower of Jesus will be difficult (John 16:33). Troubles are sure to come. But in that same verse we are reminded that we can take courage because Jesus has overcome the world. He hates suffering just as much as we do, but He is with us in the pain. What will you choose in the midst of your hard

circumstances? Belief in God and His Word or rejection of them? Comfort from Jesus or isolation from Him? Trust in His bigger plan or defeat from your pain?

As the years have rolled by, God has given me great peace through His constant presence and His word. I have learned to be less fearful and to remember that when I go through difficulty, the Lord will be with me. I like to envision the journey of pain and disappointment like the world’s scariest roller coaster. Though I’m not a big fan of coasters because I prefer to keep my feet on the ground, God has pulled me onto this ride and said, “buckle up.” But, there is good news: Jesus is strapped in right beside me. He’s smiling at me and reassuring me “Laura, it’s going to feel scary for a bit, but I am here with you.” We ride the ride, plunge down scary hills, my stomach drops out a few times and yet, when we screech to a halt with my hands holding on for dear life, He is still right there beside me. His hair is wind-blown just like mine. Not once has He left me. He has been my constant and dearest companion through this difficulty.

My hard is probably different than yours. While your story may not include disability, I am certain it includes pain. We all share in the sufferings of Christ (1 Peter 4:13). It is, in fact, what draws us to Him the most. Over the years God has grown my trust muscles through raising my son. Through His Spirit in me I have developed the ability to embrace difficulties. By no means am I perfect, and our situation has not gotten easier, but my awareness of God’s presence has increased in my life. My circumstances don’t scream at me as loudly as they used to.

Furthermore, God has used this hard for my good and His glory in a many ways. First, I have seen Him strengthen my own faith. When Owen was three years old it was evident that he would not walk, and we then needed a wheelchair and for our home to be accessible for him. We had just

gotten out of debt and did not know our best next step, so we asked the church to pray. Suddenly, money came rolling in from every direction. Faithful people were helping us in our time of need. We were able to remodel our home and get Owen exactly what he needed. Now, every time I see those hard wood floors rather than thick carpet, I am reminded of God's presence and awareness of our needs. I cannot tell you how many times I have needed that reminder. Second, I have seen God change the lives of others. My sister, who had been an atheist for years, watched our journey intently, day after day. After seeing God's faithfulness in our lives, she finally accepted Christ and plugged into a Bible teaching church.

He can redeem anything. So, whether you are challenged with embracing a hard situation for one of your children, a difficult marriage, the loss of a job, a medical diagnosis, or anything else, you can rest in the fact that your Heavenly Father will not leave or forsake you (Deuteronomy 31:6). He will use trials in your life to bring greater intimacy with Him. As you walk through your pain, His glory and goodness will be revealed to you, and others around you, all the more.

Choose the path of embracing today. Read His word. Take comfort in His care. And choose to rest in His plan, even if you don't like it. He will use your hard circumstances to bring about His glory. And He will be with you in it every step of the way.

- Laura

"He will use trials in your life to bring greater intimacy with Him. As you walk through your pain, His glory and goodness will be revealed to you, and others around you, all the more."