

36 PARABLES

AMBER BIBLE STUDY

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Film: *The Good Shepherd*

Parable: *The Good Shepherd*

Scripture: *John 10:11-18*

Interpreting *The Good Shepherd*

Love always shows itself through a willingness to sacrifice for the beloved. That's true in this film about a little girl who desperately wants to care for hamsters from her older sister's class (on loan from school). Her snooty older sister isn't really concerned with the welfare of the animals—she sees them more as a badge of prestige than creatures worthy of her nurture. This creates a crisis in the younger sister, a committed animal-lover. If she tries to help the hamsters, she knows her sister will rat her out (no pun intended) for an accident that she caused earlier in the day. Love, however, wins out, as the younger sister sacrifices herself in order to make sure that the pets have been properly fed and watered.

Jesus makes a clear distinction between the good shepherd and the “hired hand.” Most of the time they look about the same...until the wolf comes. Then the difference is apparent. The hired hand runs—no sense in sacrificing for some dumb sheep. The good shepherd stands his ground. He's willing to take a hit for the sheep because it's not just a job for the good shepherd—he actually loves the sheep. Jesus goes on to say that he is that good shepherd for us. Jesus cares about his sheep (us) so much that he was willing to lay down his life (on the cross) to stop the wolf from devouring us.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some examples of “hired hand” leaders today?
2. How does this parable illuminate Jesus' sacrifice on the cross?
3. What things in your life are you willing to sacrifice for?

Background

Some cultures herd sheep with dogs and whistles. They drive the sheep where they want them to go. This was not true for Jewish shepherds. They led and protected the sheep. The sheep became trusting of their shepherd (if he was good). They followed the sound of his voice. This is love-based shepherding, not fear-based. Notice how Peter caught on to this model in 1 Peter 5:2-4:

“Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.”

Discussion Questions

1. How can we tell the difference between the shepherd's voice and other voices?
2. Did you view religion as fear-based or love-based when you were growing up?
3. What distinguishes good shepherds from hired hands today?

As you reflect on the parable and the video, consider that Jesus told these parables so that we could learn truth in the midst of our everyday lives. Because reveals himself through common experiences, and we should be able to find Jesus in the most unlikely places. Christ can “show up” while we're sitting in front of our computers at work, cooking dinner, or driving in traffic. It's great to learn during the big moments of our lives, but Christ clearly notes that learning about his love, his grace, and his mercy can be experienced in the most ordinary circumstances of our lives as well.