

Questions for reflection, application, and discussion

1. From the 23rd Psalm, to the parable of the good shepherd in Luke 15, to Jesus' claim to be the good shepherd in John 10, the Bible filled with imagery comparing God's relationship to us to the relationship of a shepherd and his sheep.
 - a. Pastor Mike pointed out that historically this has been one of the most loved images of the Bible. In your opinion and personal experience, what about this image of a shepherd and his sheep makes it so loved?
 - b. In our modern world most of us have no first-hand experience with shepherds and sheep. How does this lack of personal experience impact our understanding of this image taught in these passages?
2. When the Bible teaches that our relationship to God is like that of a sheep to their shepherd, it teaches that we are like sheep, a comparison that's anything but a complement since sheep are arguably the dumbest and most defenseless animals in all creation.
 - a. What do you think is God's purpose in repeatedly using this analogy? What is he trying to teach us by saying that we are like sheep?
 - b. In his message Pastor Mike described several characteristics of sheep, relating them to the character of humanity. Which of these character traits stood out to you?
3. In his message Pastor Mike said that it is impossible to embrace Jesus as our good shepherd until we get first admit that we are like sheep.
 - a. What do you think he meant by this? Do you agree or disagree?
 - b. Practically, what does it mean to admit that we are like sheep? What actions and/or attitudes reveal that we aren't admitting that we are like sheep?
4. One of the primary reasons that we fail to fully depend on Jesus with the trust with which sheep depend upon their shepherd is because deep down we doubt the wisdom, love, and strength of Jesus.
 - a. In his message Pastor Mike stated that often we may have the right theology about God, but our lack of full trust and dependence reveals we really don't really believe that theology. Do you agree with this? Does a lack of full trust and submission always reveal a gap between our theology and our faith? Explain your answer.
 - b. In John 10:11-21 Jesus invites us to trust him as our good shepherd by teaching us about his wisdom, love, and strength. What stands out to you from what Jesus teaches in this passage? What about his character as the good shepherd do you need to trust more?
5. In his message Pastor Mike argued that most people fail to have the trusting dependent relationship with Jesus as their good shepherd for a combination of two reasons: we are too confident in ourselves and thus unwilling to admit we are sheep, and/or we doubt the wisdom, love, and strength of God as our good shepherd.
 - a. In your opinion, are these two intrinsically connected? In other words, is a struggle to believe one side of the issue always tied to a struggle to believe the other side? Explain your answer.
 - b. Which of these two issues is more difficult for you? How does your struggle with this contribute to your resistance to fully depend on Jesus?