

Small Group Questions | October 28th, 2018

Explore God – Can I Know God Personally?

John 10:1–21

Other Passages Referenced: John 20:30–31; Ezekiel 34:7–16

Introductory Comments to Group Leaders:

Thank you for your contribution in facilitating the **Explore God** fall emphasis with your small group. “Can I know God personally?” is our final and most personal question of the series. Our answer will build and depend upon the answers to the previous six questions. Although we conclude, “Yes, we can know God personally,” we’re dealing with much more than an academic exercise. Two related questions beg to be answered: (1) “**How** can I know God personally?” and (2) “**Do I** know God personally as described by Jesus?” Jesus says our personal responses to these questions have eternal consequences. Whether everyone in your group has come to know God personally through faith in Jesus or if some are still exploring that possibility, you should find it encouraging spending some time in the application section reviewing how to know God personally. If anyone has not come to that relational knowledge of Jesus as the one whose voice they recognize and follow—the one they trust to save and lead them—please invite them into the sheepfold of the Good Shepherd.

Here are the video links for this week’s videos that correspond to our big question:

Pulse of the World – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kx1ar0vliYE>

The Curiosity Collective – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PYTFoRwwi8M>

Again this week, I put some answers to the questions and commentary in bold text at the bottom of this document. The numbers correspond to the numbers of the questions. Please refer to those answers after you have delved into the text on your own.

Sermon Recap: We can know God personally. For in Jesus Christ, God came in person, so we can know God personally. If you want to know Him, listen for His voice as the Good Shepherd. Admit that you have been trusting your own ability to find your own door. Turn from following your own way. Believe that Jesus Christ is the Door. Connect with Jesus’ community the church (sheepfold).

Hook: A Question to Help Ignite Conversation

Please show one or both of the videos above, depending on what you think will be most helpful to your group. Allow a few minutes for comments.

Look: (Please read this to your group.)

Background Helps –

Sheep and the Shepherd’s Voice — From NT scholar Gerald Borchert: “Having taught in Israel, two illustrations have become seared in my memory concerning eastern shepherds and their sheep. Of the two pictures, one is that of a shepherd leading his sheep through the city of Jerusalem just outside the Jaffa Gate. Cars were whizzing by while the shepherd sang and gently whistled to his sheep, and they dutifully followed him despite all of the bustling traffic nearby. The other picture is that of an early morning with the Bedouins when the shepherds began to lead their sheep out of the sheepfold, which contained the combined flocks of four shepherds. As each shepherd took his turn and began to sing and call his sheep, they dutifully separated from the larger flock and began to follow him to the

hills for their daylight feeding (cf. 10:3–4).”¹

The Sheepfold and Gate/Door — The sheepfold was a place of security, not a place for intruders. Such a sheepfold would likely have been either a circular or square enclosure, probably constructed like a high stone fence or wall and perhaps topped with vines. The entrance would have been the only break in the wall, and once the sheep were safely inside at night, the watchman/guard (either a servant or a shepherd, usually an assistant) would lie down across the opening and serve both as the protector for the sheep and as a gate to the sheepfold. Unless an intruder was willing to confront the watchman, the only way into the sheepfold was to climb the wall (cf. 10:1).²

Different meanings of “know.”— In our daily English communication we use the same word “know” for different kinds of knowledge. For example, someone might ask, “Do you know the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank?” and I might respond, “Yes, I **know**. It’s Jerome Powell.” Another might say, “I don’t remember his name but I **know** him when I see him.” Yet, his friends and family would say, “I **know** him well.” New Testament Greek uses different words to help distinguish between knowing facts about, recognizing, and having a personal relationship between the **knower** and the **known**.

Read Ezekiel 34:1–16 to provide a context and then Read John 10:1–21

1. To whom does it seem Jesus was addressing these comments?
2. To what is Jesus referring by his use of “the sheepfold”?
3. Once again John uses two “**truly, truly ...**” statements in **John 10:1** and **10:7** that emphasize main points in the passage. List what we find in these two “**truly, truly ...**” statements.
4. In addition to Jesus twice saying, “**I am the door**” (vs. 7,9) He also says two times, “**I am the good shepherd**” (vs. 11, 14). What does Jesus say the good shepherd does in **10:11**? Note the four times Jesus talks about laying down his life in **John 10:15–18**. How does he differentiate laying down his life from others taking his life?
5. In **10:4–5**, how does Jesus describe the relationship between (1) the voices his sheep hear, (2) knowing him, and (3) following him?
6. In **10:14–15**, to what relationship does Jesus compare the way he knows his sheep and they know him?

Illustrations:

Illustrations and quotes can be found on the “Sermon Slides” link at the bottom of www.wcchapel.org

Took: *Applying the message to our lives.*

Practical Applications:

1. “How can I know God personally?”
 - a. In our Explore God series, we have seen that God created us with a purpose of worshiping him and reflecting his image. He was to be the Good Shepherd and the humans He created were to follow Him.
 - b. There is not a day that goes by that we don’t fall short in each of those endeavors. The prophet Isaiah explains, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way;” (Isa 53:6a). This is what the Bible means by “sin,” substituting ourselves or something else in God’s rightful place as Shepherd.
 - c. In Jesus, the invisible God made Himself visible and knowable. The transcendent God became immanent. Jesus perfectly fulfilled the purposes of worshiping God alone and reflecting His image.

¹ Gerald L. Borchert, [John 1–11](#), vol. 25A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 330.

² Ibid., 331.

- d. Realizing that we had followed voices that led us away from God toward destruction, Jesus came as the Good Shepherd to “seek and save the lost” (Luke 19:10) from predators and from our own waywardness.
 - e. Jesus laid his life down to save ours. The second half of Isaiah 53:6 states, “And the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all.” The Good Shepherd became “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).
 - f. Jesus then took his life back up again to appear to many witnesses before he ascended into heaven in the sight of many. Thus God validated Jesus as the Good Shepherd for all eternity.
 - g. As Jesus had promised (John 15:26) He also sent the Holy Spirit to indwell His people all over the world so they could hear his voice and follow. This was not possible during his geographically-limited earthly ministry.
 - h. In the person of Jesus, God fulfilled His promises that go back as far as Genesis 3 to send a Savior King who would lead us back to life and relationship with God as the Good Shepherd. Jesus’ coming and the Kingdom he promised were the good news of the gospel.
 - i. Jesus is not walking the earth in physical form today, but he has sent the Holy Spirit to live inside of those who trust Jesus as the only sufficient Savior and Lord. More than knowing facts about God or recognizing Jesus when we see him, the Holy Spirit inside us allows us to know God as Jesus knows the Father and the Father knows Jesus—intimately and experientially.
 - j. In Mark 1:15, Jesus Himself told people what is needed: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” **Repent** means to turn away from other voices and would be shepherds so that we can trust and follow Jesus. **Believe** means to put our trust and faith in Jesus as Savior and King—trusting that his death and resurrection were both necessary and sufficient for our salvation. He is worthy of our following and worthy of our worship.
 - k. There is no magical prayer to bring this personal relationship into being. However, there is a true change of heart and surrender that denies oneself and commits to follow God’s voice as He speaks through Scripture and the Holy Spirit. This is what Jesus referred to as being **born again** or **born from above** as he talked with Nicodemus in John 3.
 - l. This new spiritual birth brings you into the sheepfold of the Good Shepherd, Jesus. Connecting with his church is a vital first step in following Him.
2. Now that we have addressed the question of “How can I know God personally?” it’s time for each of us to honestly answer one more question, “Have I come to know God personally as described by Jesus throughout our *Explore God* series?” ... If not, is there anything you are aware of that is keeping you from trusting and following Jesus?
 3. Will you pray for God to lead you to someone who needs to hear what God’s word has been teaching you through this sermon/study?

Verse (You might consider memorizing this one): “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and they know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.”— John 10:14–15

Prayer:

- As you pray for one another, please also remember the mission team in the Ukraine and the upcoming Christmas concerts.

“Lord Jesus, teach me to hear and trust your voice. Help me recognize and reject those voices that would lead me farther from you rather than closer to you. Fill me with the Holy Spirit so I can recognize your voice and have the will and strength to follow you. Use me to lead others to trust and follow you.”

What we hope members glean from the passage.

1. He was still in Jerusalem and this section comes right after Jesus offending the religious leaders in John 9 by calling them blind. These were people who were considered to be spiritual shepherds of the Jewish people. We see a division among his hearers in 10:19.
2. We want to make sure that we don't confuse "the sheepfold" with heaven. The clearest understanding refers to those who follow Jesus, which would be the church. Jesus is the door into the church. He is the one who lays down His life at the entrance to keep predators away. Any voices that say Jesus is not God and lure people away from following Him are strangers, thieves, and robbers who would destroy the sheep.
3. 10:1 – "he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber" and 10:7 – "I am the door of the sheep." The only valid way into the sheepfold is through the door/gate and Jesus is that door/gate. Note that the sermon highlighted a claim that Jesus does not simply point us to the door to God. Rather, Jesus as God Himself, is the Door.
4. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. Jesus mentions laying down his life of his own accord and twice he mentions taking it up again. He wants his hearers to know that his coming death was not as a victim of mob violence or a mistake of being at the wrong place at the wrong time. He is saying that no one could take his life without his permission and even then, he had the power to take it back up again.
5. For Jesus, hearing and knowing his voice naturally led to his sheep following him. There was no thought of his sheep hearing and knowing his voice and then going their own way.
6. Jesus compares the way he knows his sheep and they know him with the way he and God the Father know one another.