

Aim of lesson

To see what it means to have Jesus as our leader.

Bible background

John 10; Ezekiel 34

Outline of lesson

Who is my leader?

Get the young people to open their workbooks and ask the class if they can think of who wants to be their leader: the political leader of the country, “boss” of their group of friends at school, leader of fashion, leaders in pop music, etc. Let them fill in the boxes in the picture with the names they suggest.

The Good Shepherd

Turn to John 10 for them to answer the next two questions. Ask the class to look through verses 3,4,10 and 11 to find the qualities of a good shepherd. They should write these in the first column of the checklist. Discuss briefly what each means.

verse 3 calls his sheep by name (knows his followers by name)

verse 3 leads them out (leads to what they need – food)

verse 4 goes ahead of them (does first what he expects them to do)

verse 10 gives abundant life (gives the best life there is to followers)

verse 11 lays down life for sheep (dies or risks his life for followers)

Get the class each to choose two of their ‘leaders’ for the checklist test. They should write their names at the head of the middle two columns. As the class discuss how each of the three leaders measures up to the qualities of a good shepherd, encourage them to consider as fully as possible the ways in which the Lord Jesus does fulfil all the qualifications.

Bad shepherds

Ask the class to read Ezekiel 34:1-6, stopping when they find something that the bad shepherds do, to put it in the workbook. Discuss what each means, not only as a shepherd with his sheep, but as a leader with his people. Bring out the fact that the bad shepherds care only about themselves and care nothing for the sheep. The good shepherd cares for the sheep and nothing for his own life.

Needing a shepherd?

It is likely that seniors will think that they do not need anyone to lead them; they want to run their own lives. Use the last section to point out that the world is full of people who think like that. Ask the class to consider where it has got them; selfishness means half the world starves, and even where there is enough, most people are part of a rat race and never find real happiness.

Get the class to list (in the sheep) the kind of problems sheep get into without a shepherd: eaten by wolves, trapped in areas they can’t get out of, following each other in circles, etc. Jesus says he gives abundant life, life to the full (John 10:10). Discuss what that means. It certainly includes eternal life in a perfect future but also means a life now which is really happy, satisfying, knowing real peace and joy, even in difficulties.

An older class might like to read the rest of Ezekiel 34 to see God’s love, as a shepherd, for his people.

Digging deeper

I am the way

This section looks at occasions when Jesus says ‘I AM’ in John, and relates them to Matthew 7:13-14, the parable about the broad and narrow way. Jesus is the door (gate), the way, and the life to which it leads.

Relevance to our lives

Sheep in this country have a mark on them to show whose they are. Jesus knows his sheep so he does not need a mark; nevertheless, in John 10:27 Jesus says that the distinguishing mark of his sheep is that they listen to his voice. Discuss ways in which the class can listen to his voice during the week. This can involve reading what he says and putting it into practice.

Prayer

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for being such a good shepherd and caring for us. Help us to follow where you lead.

Other suggestions for activities

- If you are already making a chart of the ‘I AM’ sayings of Jesus it could be continued. Note that there are two in this chapter.
- The class could write their own “Psalm 23”, each using a different aspect of the work of the shepherd, e.g.: The Lord is my leader, I won’t get lost ... The Lord is my healer, I can go to him when I feel bruised and knocked about by life... The Lord is my protector, I am not afraid of what happens...