



Home group study questions on Numbers 27:12-23

Theme: Wayward and vulnerable Israel needs a shepherd after Moses. YHWH is their shepherd, yet graciously continues to provide a human shepherd through who he will save them and keep his promises.

Aims:

- See that we are vulnerable and need a shepherd
- See God's graciousness in continually shepherding his wayward flock
- Rejoice and trust that even though the greatest human shepherds die, the greater Joshua shepherds us on our way to the promised land.

- 1) In Numbers 27:16-17, Moses prays that Israel will not be left like sheep without a shepherd. Think back through the sermon or what you know of Genesis to Numbers. In what ways were God's people like sheep in need of a shepherd?
- 2) Look back at Genesis 3:1-6, which helps us understand the root of our 'sheepishness'. How does the serpent persuade Eve to disbelieve God's words and distrust his character?
- 3) Look at Genesis 3 verses 7-10. How does their disobedience further damage the way they relate to God?
- 4) This same distrust, disbelieve and fear seem to have been passed down the generations. They are present in every human heart, so we are like sheep who constantly stray from our shepherd.

Where do you find it hardest to trust in your shepherd's good intentions for you?

Where do you find it hardest to believe his words?

Where are you most afraid of him?

N.B. the examples in the sermon were: 1) running from danger and trying to hide, rather than staying close to our shepherd (e.g. hiding your faith at school or work); 2) doubting

God's good purposes for us in our current circumstances when they are hard (e.g. always focusing on the negatives in your job, feeling dissatisfied and assuming the grass would be greener on the other side); 3) not trusting God to provide for tomorrow and constantly worrying or hoarding wealth today, instead of seeking first God's kingdom and his righteousness (Matt 6:19-34); 4) feeling too afraid to draw near God and receive mercy because of his holiness and our sin; 5) not trusting that God really loves us and that his commands are given for our good and flourishing - so we either refuse to obey, thinking his commands will oppress us, or we only obey grudgingly because we think we have to earn his love.

- 5) Back to Numbers 27:12-23. How does God show his graciousness to his wayward flock here?
- 6) God is the true shepherd of his people, but why is it a kindness that he appoints a man as an under-shepherd? *(To put it another way, why might we find it hard to relate to God without a human go-between?)*
- 7) In the sermon, we heard how Joshua points forward to another shepherd: Jesus (the Greek version of the Hebrew name Joshua). Our situation is similar to ancient Israel in the wilderness, because we are pilgrims on the way to the promised land – the new heaven and earth of Revelation 21-22. But we have a shepherd who will never die and cannot fail to lead us home.

Where would you most like to grow in trust of your shepherd?

Pray that for each other.