

## MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ are more shepherd than sheep.

## SCRIPTURE

JOHN 21:15-19; ISAIAH 53:6

## BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

The last time Jesus and Peter were together was before Jesus' death and resurrection. In the meantime, Peter had denied even knowing Jesus. Notice that when Jesus addressed Peter, he called him Simon, Peter's original name, before Christ changed it (Matt. 16:18). Using the conflicting names could have been a gentle reminder from Jesus of Peter's recent conflicting behavior. Jesus had no intention of leaving Peter where he was. Christ had big plans for Peter and needed to restore him for those plans to be carried out. Jesus was moving Peter from sheep to shepherd.

Check out the **Teacher Prep Video** for this lesson: <https://vimeo.com/816579346>



**FACILITATOR NOTE:** We're giving you a lot of teaching material. Don't feel like you should cover everything here. You know your group better than anyone. Choose the material that will best fit your students and skip over the rest.

## OPENING

### PRAYER

Start your small group by asking the Lord to bless your discussion and time together.

*OPTIONAL: Give students an opportunity to lead the prayer.*

1-2 minutes

### OPENING QUESTIONS

- How was the week? What's the best thing that's happened? Anything major going on?
- If you could be any animal, what would you be? And why?

3-5 minutes



## EXPLORE

### EXPLORE GOD'S WORD

3-5 minutes

As Christ-followers, we sometimes forget one simple fact: we are sheep. We are not very bright, have a habit of wandering away, need a shepherd to guide us, and tend to think only about ourselves. In these moments, we let sin guide our lives, which can isolate us from others. But Jesus demonstrates that anyone can be restored in relationships, even someone who denied him three times. Jesus wanted to change Peter from a sheep into a shepherd because *disciples of Christ are more shepherd than sheep*.

**Read Isaiah 53:6 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:**

7–10 minutes

- **What words would you use to describe a sheep?**  
Answers will vary. Help them paint a picture of a sheep in their minds. You could even look up sheep videos—there are some funny ones online.
- **What are some of the ways you get led astray?**  
Help connect what it means to be a sheep with their everyday actions. Possible answers: going along with your friends' gossip, watching or listening to things that aren't pleasing to God, etc.



*Say something like:* Isaiah painted a picture not only of who the Messiah would be but also why humanity needs saving in the first place. Like sheep, we have been led astray from God by sin, which has a cost. Jesus paid that cost for us on the cross in order to restore us.

**Read John 21:15 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:**

7–10 minutes

- **If you feel comfortable, share a story of a time you denied Jesus, like Peter did. How did it make you feel?**  
This is a heavy question, so come prepared with your own story. Point out that these feelings need to push us closer to Jesus, not further away. There was grace for Peter, and there is grace for us!
- **Why is it so hard to stand up for our faith when others push against what we believe?**  
Answers will vary but may include feeling like the only one or being scared of what others may think or say. This is a chance to dive deeper into what it means to go astray.



*Say something like:* Jesus connected Peter's sheep-like tendencies to his actions. It was an important first step in moving him from being a sheep to being a shepherd, but it also reminds us that we are never truly far from God.

**FACILITATOR NOTE:** If you have extra time, go through the next set of questions. If not, skip to the **Connection** section.

**Read John 21:15–19 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:**

7–10 minutes

- **Do you find Peter's story encouraging? Why or why not?**  
Answers will vary. Help your students see themselves in how Jesus restored Peter.
- **Jesus told Peter to take care of and feed his sheep. Who in your life is Jesus asking you to support and love?**  
Answers will vary. Challenge students to consider if we are called to be a shepherd, who are we leading? Every student influences someone, whether they see it or not.
- **In your own words, what does it mean to follow Jesus?**  
Answers will vary. Don't be afraid to challenge and push your students to take this question seriously.



*Say something like:* Though the questions hurt Peter, Jesus was speaking a hard truth into his life, and he would be better for it. We all need people who can do what Jesus does for Peter. Jesus will always leave the others to find one sheep who has gone astray, but he doesn't want us to stay sheep. Jesus is actually calling us to be shepherds. We are to go into the world and do for others what has been done for us.



## CONNECT &amp; APPLY

## CONNECTION

5-7 minutes

Show your students how Scripture connects to their lives: Use the example below OR share a personal story about how you began to move from sheep to shepherd.



Steven grew up in a rough home, and no one in his family was a Christ-follower. Through his youth pastor and small group leader, Steven understood that he was loved unconditionally. The love of God didn't have strings or conditions attached to it—he had it because of what Jesus did on the cross. Jesus changed Steven's life, but Steven had lived so far from God that he didn't think he was worthy of God's love. For the next few years, Steven struggled to accept what Christ freely gave him, to believe that he was lovable. However, God started to speak in Steven's life and used others to challenge him. They called out the lies and pushed him toward a deeper relationship with Jesus. In the end, Steven not only grew but dedicated his life to doing for others what was done for him by becoming a pastor.

- Why can it be so hard to accept that Jesus loves and forgives our sins?

Answers might include a lack of trust, guilt, believing lies, etc. The first step in moving from being a sheep to a shepherd is trusting that Jesus always does what he says he will.

## MARK OF A DISCIPLE

2-3 minutes

Disciples of Christ are more shepherd than sheep.

Use the Mark of a Disciple to reinforce the lesson and challenge students to apply it to their lives.

## APPLY IT

5-10 minutes

Take some time to think through who in your life Jesus is calling you to come alongside and support. How can you care for them the same way Jesus cares for you?



**Be specific:**

- What are you going to do?
- When are you going to do it?
- Is there someone who can keep you accountable?



**FACILITATOR NOTE:** Allow students who are comfortable to share their plans for application. This may encourage or spark ideas for other students, plus add a level of accountability.



**CLOSING****PRAYER**

2–3 minutes

Take time to let your students pray for each other's applications in the upcoming weeks. Spend time praying that your students would understand that we may act like sheep, but that's not all Jesus wants us to be.

*Write down any prayer requests mentioned and ask your students about them at your next meeting.*

**MEMORY VERSE**

*Send the memory verse graphic included in your download to your students later this week to keep the conversation going.*

"All we like sheep have gone astray;  
we have turned—every one—to his own way;  
and the LORD has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all."

Isaiah 53:6 (ESV)

**NOTES**

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