

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

LIFE GROUPS | FRIENDSCHURCH

Mother's Day

PASSAGE: Isaiah 40:11 | 5/11 - 12/19

Main Idea: As the shepherd offers protection and love to his sheep, so too does the Lord offer his protection and love to us.

LEAN IN

1. What is your favorite farm animal. Why?

LOOK DOWN

Guest speaker, Sheila Walsh, described a scene from her childhood in Scotland where an ewe (a mother sheep) would give birth to a "bummer lamb". This lamb was rejected by the mother, most often because the lamb was born as a twin and/or the mother did not have enough milk. Unless the shepherd intervened, the baby lamb would die. So the shepherd would take that bummer lamb into his home, hand feed it from a bottle, and keep it warm by the fire. He would wrap it up warm and hold it close enough to hear a heartbeat. When the lamb is strong the shepherd places it back in the field with the rest of the flock. When the shepherd calls the sheep each morning, the bummer lambs are the first ones to run to him. The aren't more loved by the shepherd - it's just that they believe and trust his love.

2. With this image in mind, Read Isaiah 40:11. What is the shepherd offering the lambs in gathering them "into his arms"? What is the significance of the shepherd carrying his lambs "close to his heart"?
3. When a shepherd responds this way to a lamb, what beliefs might arise within the lamb about the shepherd? What beliefs might arise within the lamb about itself?
4. Read Ps 147:3. This passage describes two ailments: brokenness of heart and woundedness. Describe each condition and any differences you see between them. This passage also describes two acts of the Lord: healing and binding. Describe each and any difference you see between them.

Leaders notes: The image of the shepherd gathering the lamb in his arms is a symbol of protection. Lambs (sheep that are within their first year of life) are weak and vulnerable to predators. The shepherd is a defender for them. The reference of shepherds carrying lambs "close to his heart" signifies great affection and intimate communion.

Other notable references to the Lord as shepherd: Ezek. 34:11-16, Ps 23, and John 10:3-5, 27.

LOOK OUT

5. The shepherd protects his sheep. What do we need protection from most in our world today?
6. The shepherd has great affection and love for his sheep. What results do you see in people that have suffered a lack of affection and love? What results do you see in people that have received great love and affection?
7. Describe a person you know that best embodies someone who is deeply loved. What characteristics do you see in them? How do they respond to challenges? How would you describe their relationships? How do you feel when you are around them?

LOOK IN

8. Where in your life do you currently feel broken? Describe your wounds?
9. How is God meeting you in your brokenness? Are there places or times when you feel like he is absent in the midst of your brokenness?
10. Do you, in your heart, believe that God offers the protection and affection/love that Is. 40:11 describes? Why or why not? What is an act of faith or a next step you can take to open yourself and receive his protection and affection/love?

LIVE IT OUT

11. Spend time right now as a group praying together. To start, spend a few minutes listening to a few worship songs. Here's a few song suggestions to play: Lord, I need you (Matt Maher), Here Again (Elevation Worship), Lay It All Down (United Pursuit), Reckless Love (Cory Asbury).

As the truths of the songs wash over you, listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to you. Maybe you hear something for yourself, or maybe you hear something that you need to pray for others in your group.

After the songs, share what come to your mind and heart. Spend time praying for each other with what you heard from the Holy Spirit.

Sheila Walsh closed her message with Romans 8:38-39, which tells us that nothing can separate us from God's love. This is a promise. God's love is always present. He always offers it. This is a time as a group to allow yourselves to be met by his love - either directly or through the prayer of another in the group.

LEADER GUIDE

For today's questions, we do not have extra notes for leaders. We encourage you to allow the biblical text and the group discussion to guide you today!