KINGDOM of HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Community Group Material

Matthew 9:35-10:4

Week of 3rd to 9th September

The Compassion of Christ and the Lord of the Harvest

Leader Preparation

Read through the passage so that you are familiar with it.

This passage comes after the third (and last) cycle of accounts of Jesus's authority in Matthew 8&9. The passage therefore includes a call to discipleship and prepares for the Missionary Discourse. It contains a summary of Jesus' ministry and appeal for more workers.

There are four key focus areas:

The Summary of Jesus' Ministry

- Matthew 9:35 is the same as Matthew 4:23, and that shows this is an end of the section where we have seen Jesus' Authoritative Word (5-7), and Jesus' Authoritative Works (8-9).

The Compassion of Jesus

- Exploring the compassion of Jesus for the lost sheep of Israel

The Condition of the Lost

- Exploring the harassed and helpless sheep and their shepherds

The Plentiful Harvest

- Exploring Jesus' call for us to join his mission

Read through the material on page 16 of the CG leader manual, familiarising yourself with the parts that were not taught in the sermon. Focus on the questions most relevant to your group in the discussion time.

Spend some time praying for the members of your group, and asking God to guide you as you lead your time together. Read through the questions, particularly looking for ways to share openly with your group. Remember, sharing in a genuine and open way yourself is the best way to encourage group members to be honest and open in the group.

Time allowance:

Different groups meet for different times. Here is a suggested time allocation for your group get-together:

Welcome!	15min
Icebreaker	10min
Recap	5min
Bible discussion	40min
Sharing & prayer	20min

Group time

A bit of fun

Choose one of the pages at the end of the study and ask your group to share about one of the following:

- Page 1: how are you feeling today?
- Page 2: what aspect of one of the sheep can you identify with?

Recap

Last week we spoke about the compassion of Jesus as he reached out to heal people who needed him. This week will focus more on how we learn to respond in the same compassionate way.

Exploring the Passage

READ Matthew 9:35-38

The Summary of Jesus' Ministry – Matthew 9:35

- Verses 4:23 and 9:35 "bookend" the passages describing Jesus' Authoritative Word (5-7), and Jesus' Authoritative Works (8-9). How many people and cities do you think Jesus himself would have reached by this stage as he went through the Galilean cities and villages?
- How does Jesus differ from the kind of Messiah the Israelites were hoping for?

The Compassion of Jesus – Matthew 9:36a

- The word used to describe the compassion of Jesus shows that he was not just emotionally moved but he was physically affected with compassion. The greek word used for compassion means 'to be moved in the inward parts'(to have bowels moved i.e. literally).
    - Can you describe a time when you were moved with compassion for someone in such a powerful way – not just identifying their need, but entering into the sense of their suffering?
- How can we become more sensitive to the needs of others? What practical things can we do to grow in this way? How can we become more compassionate about the needs of others? How can we allow God to soften our hearts to love them wholeheartedly and not just meet their needs?
- We have seen how Jesus addressed both the physical and the spiritual needs of those he cared for. How can we do better at this?
- What might prevent us from being open to experiencing compassion for others?

The Condition of the Lost - Matthew 9:36b

- In what ways were the people of Israel 'harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd'?
- Who was supposed to be shepherding them? Were they doing a good job?
- Read Ezekiel 34:1-12 or Jeremiah 23:1-10.
- What kind of shepherds does the Lord call for? How is Jesus the Good Shepherd in contrast to the Jewish leaders of the time? How does this make you feel about the responsibilities of leadership?
- In what ways could people today be described as 'harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd'?

The Plentiful Harvest – Matthew 9:37-38

- What motivates you to reach out to people with the good news about Jesus?
- There are two elements to the urgency of the harvest:
    - The time limitation brought by the finality of judgement
    - The large number of people that need to be reached with the gospel
- Does this urgency compel you to action or make you feel helpless?
- How can you follow Jesus' instruction from this passage?
- How can a Christian know whether God is calling him/her into "full time" Christian work?

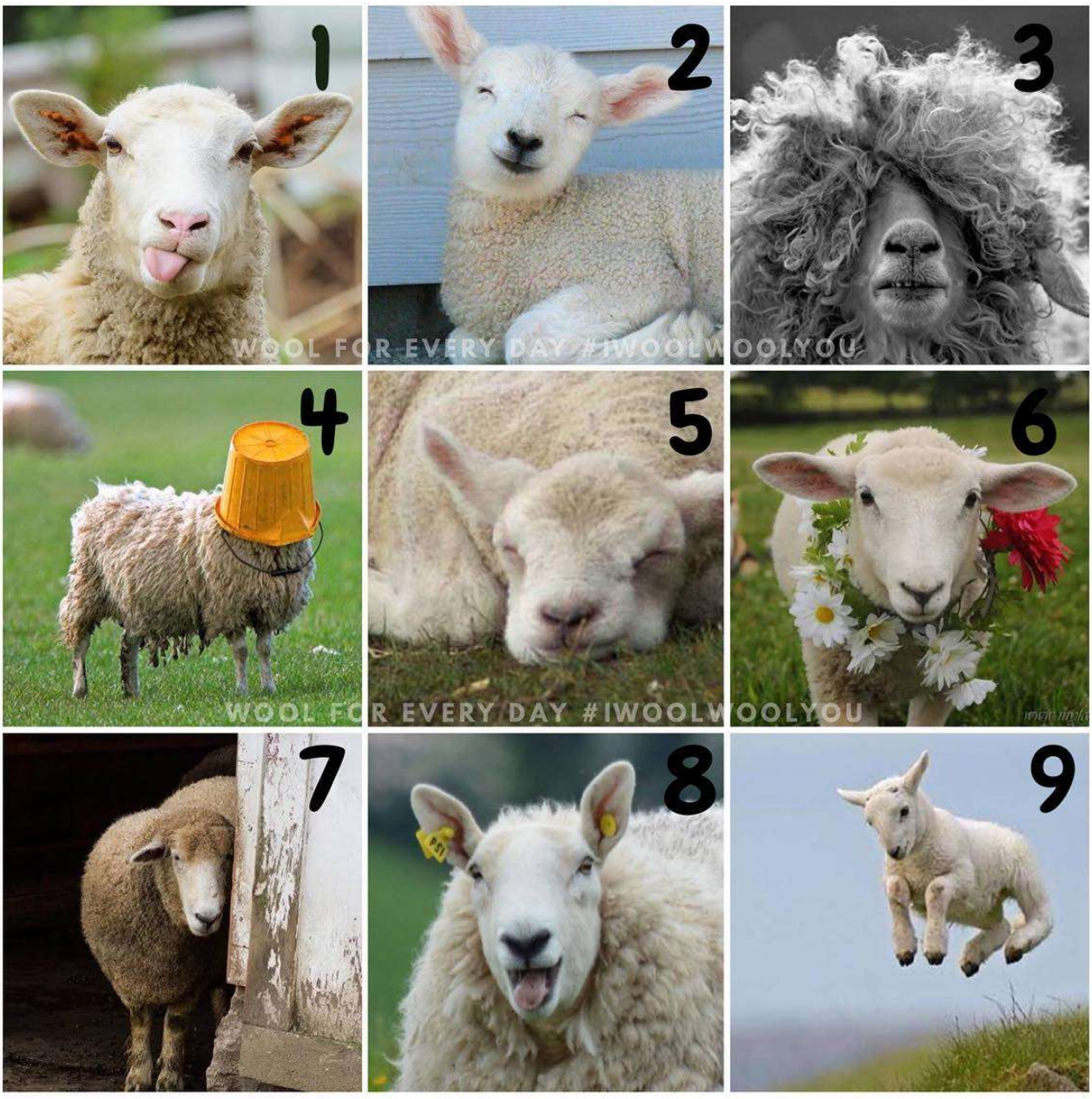
Sharing and Prayer

Follow the command to PRAY for workers to be sent out into the harvest. Perhaps pray for a place or people group that is particularly in need of the Good News.

> *Oh Lord! Today you have taught us another of your wondrous lessons. We ask you to help us to clearly see the spiritual realities you reveal. Show us the harvest which is so large and perishing, as it waits for labourers to come. Lord, teach us to look out upon it with a heart moved with compassion. Lord, move us to pray as you have instructed. Show us Lord how you do wait for the prayers you requested to be prayed. Let us see the arm of the Lord of the harvest, so able and ready to send out the disciples: Lord, allow your Spirit to stir up our compassion, and give us faith in your promises that rouses us to unceasing prayer.*
> *Oh our Lord! we cannot understand how you would entrust such work and give such power to men so lazy and unfaithful. We thank you for all those who pray day and night for labourers to be sent forth. Lord, breathe your Spirit on all your children, that we may learn to live for this one thing alone—the Kingdom and glory of our Lord—and become fully awake to the faith of what our prayer can accomplish. And let all our hearts in this, as in every petition, be filled with the assurance that prayer, offered in loving faith in the living God, will bring certain and abundant answer. Amen.*
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> *Adapted from "With Christ in the School of Prayer" by Andrew Murray*

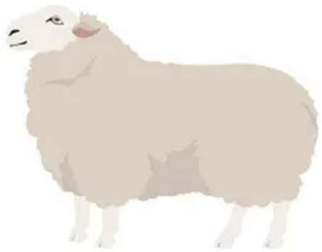
Spend some time praying for God to make us aware of ways that we can reach out to share the news of the kingdom with those around us.
Take special time to pray for anyone in the group who feels that God may have a particular calling for them to "go out" into the harvest.

On this sheep-scale, how do you feel today?



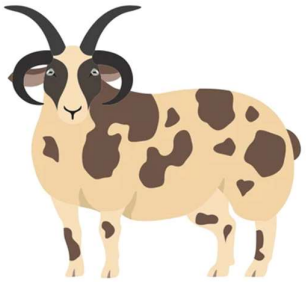
WOOL FOR EVERY DAY #IWOOLWOOLYOU

Welsh Mountain Sheep



A breed with liveliness in abundance. They are able to endure all manner of rain, wind and snow. They are smaller of stature but gallant and bold. This is a breed more likely spotted on a long hike than a wander down a country lane.

Jacob

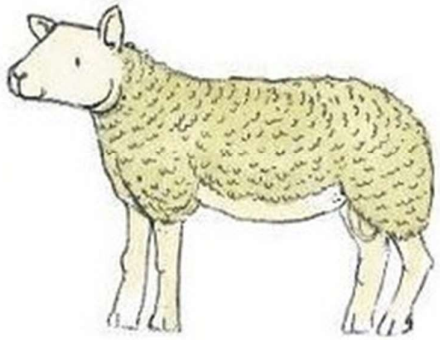


Here is a breed fit for any beauty contest. The Jacob has impressive posture, is alert and sharp witted. Its piebald and dense fleece and the accoutrement of frankly not insubstantial horns makes for a rather splendid breed. The breed has a kindly nature.

Hebridean



Scotland the Brave, this little sheep is small in stature but bold in spirit with attractive curled horns. They have tiny feet, and are adept at climbing steep hillsides and clearing stone walls. Small, pointed faces with a look of concentration.



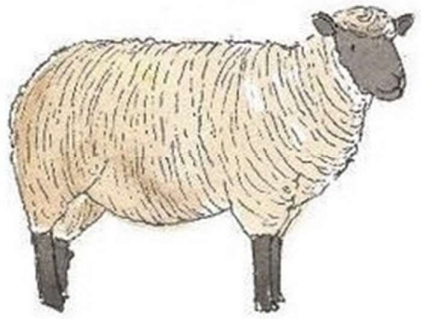
Texel

Its broad head and stocky stature give it a rather endearing appearance. Easy going and curious, they can endure most weather and are inclined to holding weight well. Uncomplicated, hardy and stoic.

The Bluefaced Leicester

As handsome as it is now famous. Tall, large of stature, alert with a proud Roman nose with large prominent ears. They have broad shoulders and a strong stance. Well known for their friendly disposition, they can be high maintenance by their nature but are curious and full of personality.





Shropshire

They have wool on their heads and a risqué and punchy personality. Sparky and active, this breed is famed for its durability. They have a strong physique. Famed for their wool, the fleece is thick, heavy, yet soft to the touch.