



LC STUDY GUIDE

Done in Sync with Rediscovering Jesus Series

The Passage: Ezekiel 34:1-16

For Life Community usage the week of 11/16 - 11/30/15

Intro: Fresh off the goodness of Global Awareness week, we return to finding traces of Jesus in the Old Testament. Previously we have looked at how Jesus is the ruler, helper, and the one who truly understands our suffering. Here we examine how Jesus is the shepherd our souls long for.

Central Point – Similar to how Jesus sought out the lost sheep of Israel despite their failed shepherding, Jesus invites all who are lost and wandering to find life and goodness in him.

Ezekiel 34:1-16

1 The word of the Lord came to me: **2** "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? **3** You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. **4** You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. **5** So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. **6** My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them.

7 "Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: **8** As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, because my flock lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than for my flock, **9** therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: **10** This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them.

11 "'For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. **12** As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. **13** I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. **14** I will tend them in a good pasture, and the

mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. **15** I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign Lord. **16** I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.

O – In verses 1-6, identify all of Ezekiel's shepherding imagery and then identify the failures of leadership that you can see.

I – Verse 4b "You have ruled them harshly and brutally" uses the same language as when Egypt was ruling over the Hebrew slaves (Ex. 1:13-14). Imagine yourself being one of Israel's failed leaders and being brought to a point of true conviction. What would be your response to these words?

A – We are all broken people. What examples of bad leadership and poor shepherding have we seen and have led? As a community of Christ-followers, what can we improve upon? How can we lead more effectively within our Christian circles and beyond?

O – What is Ezekiel saying to the failed shepherds and what's the Lord's message to the lost sheep?

I – It's poetic and beautiful to point out that Jesus acts out the words in verse 15 moments before he feeds the 5000 in Mark 6:39. How else does Jesus fulfill the concept of shepherding throughout the words and scenes of Scripture?

A – Jesus pursuing lost and wandering sheep is another beautiful image of grace and love. What has resonated with you in regards to Jesus shepherding your soul? How can we join Him in helping other lost sheep find similar green meadows of rest and filling?

- a. Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single meeting. Take some time to prayerfully discern what will serve your LC the best. Select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your Life Community group.
- b. Complement these questions with "process questions" (what else? what more? what do others think?)
- c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don't rush people but encourage their participation. And avoid answering your own questions!
- d. Application: Pace the study to conclude with difference-making application.
- e. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into "teaching" rather than facilitating. It can cause people to feel distracted or de-powered.