

Diary Devotions

Year 10

Term 1

Studies on the character and nature of God

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LOVE

The Good
Shepherd



PROVIDER

Food from
Creation

God is Love Week 1

God is a Communicator

God speaks to us.

Speaking is the most frequently mentioned act of God in the Bible

God's communication is creative - he spoke each part of Creation into being.

Genesis 1:3 "And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

God's words last forever.

Isaiah 40:80 The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

The words God spoke to Israel were so important that they were to be recorded, remembered and taught to children and future generations.

Deut. 6:6-9 These words I am commanding you today are to be upon your hearts. And you shall teach them diligently to your children and speak of them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as reminders on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates.

The word God is alive and active

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.

Jesus, the WORD (logos), was there from the beginning.

John 1:1-2 In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God.

Rev.19:13 He wore a robe dipped in blood, and his title was the Word of God. ()

Hebrews 1:1-2 Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe.

Questions and activities

1. How did the Creation come into existence?
2. What is a good way to remember God's words? (Psalm 119:11)
3. How did God speak to people in Old Testament times? (Hebrews 1:1-2)

God is Love Week 2

God is a Communicator

When Jesus spoke, people were healed and spirits were cast out.

Read the story of the healing of the Centurions servant, in Matthew 8:5-13

Matthew 8:8 But the officer said, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come into my home. Just say the word from where you are, and my servant will be healed.

Matthew 8:16 He cast out the evil spirits with a simple command, and he healed all the sick.

Matthew 7:28-29 When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, for he taught with real authority, not as their teachers taught.

God communicates with us in many ways.

We need to learn to listen to His voice, through the still small voice, through the Bible and through wise counsellors.

God's spoken word brings faith.

Romans 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ. We are designed to live by the words God speaks! (Deut.8:3, Matt.4:4)

Matthew 4: Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Our spoken words are also extremely important.

Romans 10:9-10 If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved.

Matthew 12:36-37 And I tell you this, you must give an account on judgment day for every idle word you speak. The words you say will either acquit you or condemn you.

Ephesians 4:29 Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. ()

Proverbs 18:20-21 Wise words satisfy like a good meal; the right words bring satisfaction. The tongue can bring death or life; those who love to talk will reap the consequences. (

Questions and activities

1. Give an example of the power in Jesus' words when he spoke. Read John 11:1-44. Note verse 43
2. Give three ways that God can speak to us.
3. Give three reasons why the words we speak are important.

God is Love Week 3

God is a Communicator

God listens to us. He hears us.

God's extraordinary love for us is evident in the fact that he listens to and hears us. Communication is an act of love, the foundation of relationship. God's communication with us is a genuine two-way dialogue.

God's amazing humility is evident in the fact that he is the great and powerful Creator, yet he is willing to communicate with *us*. God pays attention to our needs, problems and concerns.

Eph.3:20 God listens to our broken-hearted cries and gives us more than we can ask or imagine.

1 John 5:14-15 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

Questions and activities

1. Explain how God's communication with us is an act of God's love.
2. Read 1 Samuel 2. God listened to Hannah's cry for a child. She was not only given a son, but she also became the mother of a prophet who was one of the greatest leaders of Israel.
3. Read I Kings 17:7-24 God heard Elijah's cry as he was praying for the dead boy and raised him up to life again.
4. Read Matt 20:30-34. Jesus listened and responded to cries for help of the blind.

God is Love Week 4

God is a Communicator

God listens to us when we call out to him.

Jeremiah 29:12 Then you will call out to me. You will come and pray to me. And I will listen to you.

Jeremiah 33:3 Call out to me. I will answer you. I will tell you great things you do not know.

Matthew 7:7-8 “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”

Micah 7:7 So I will look to the Lord. I'll put my trust in God my Saviour. He will hear me.

Psalms 10:17 Lord, you hear the longings of those who are hurting. You cheer them up and give them hope. You listen to their cries.

Psalms 116:1-2 I love the Lord because he hears my voice and my prayer for mercy. Because he bends down to listen, I will pray as long as I have breath!

God hears cries for mercy:

Psalms 6:9 The LORD has heard my cry for mercy; the LORD accepts my prayer.

Psalms 116:1 I love the LORD, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy.

Questions and Activities

1. Write a Bible verse that tells us that God listens to US when we call to him.
2. What does Matthew 7:7-8 tell us about the way we should pray.
3. What does it mean to cry out to the Lord for mercy?

God is Love Week 5

God is a Communicator

There are requirements for God to answer the prayers he hears:

God requires us to have a pure heart, pure motives, faith, for us to be in right relationship with our brothers and neighbors.

Pure heart

2 Chronicles 7:14 If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Psalm 34:15 The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right; his ears are open to their cries for help.

Faith

James 1:6 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.

Mark 11:24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

Right relationships with others

1 John 4:20 “Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister whom they have seen cannot love God, whom they have not seen.”

Another requirement is that we ask according to his will.

1 John 5:14-15 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

Questions and Activities

1. Read Psalm 15 and make a list, (in your own words) of the God’s requirements in this Psalm.
2. What three requirements for God to answer our prayers?
3. What does it mean to pray ‘according to God’s will’? (1 John 5:14-15)

God is Provider / God is a Shepherd Week 1

Read John 10:1-15 I am the good shepherd; and I know my own and my own know me – I lay down My life for the sheep.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd has the power of the shepherd is to fight on behalf of the sheep. Psalm 23 describes the Good Shepherd, who cares for his sheep, leads and protects his sheep. Read Psalm 23 and make a list of all the ways that a shepherd cares for the sheep in this Psalm.

In Bible times, being a shepherd involved:

Care

- finding food and water for them
- Treating cuts and bruises

Leading

- choosing the way that they should go
- Keeping the flock together
- Keeping the sheep close to himself
- Knowing them all by name.

Protecting

- from wild animals
- Finding them the shelter of a sheep fold at night
- Teaching them to stay together

Questions and Activities

1. Make a list of all the ways that a shepherd cares for the sheep in Psalm 23.
2. In John 10:14-15, who are the sheep and who is the shepherd?
3. Draw up a table showing on one side, how a shepherd looks after sheep, and on the other side, how this is similar to Jesus looks after his followers.

A shepherd	Jesus

God is Provider / God is a Shepherd Week 2

The shepherd in Jesus' day

In Jesus' day, shepherds wandered from place to place, taking their sheep here and there, to the places where there were natural streams and good pastures. Sheep were not kept in a paddock surrounded by fences. Some shepherds slept in tents at night and some stayed in villages. Peasant shepherds who lived in a village had the right to let their flocks feed in the pastures near the village. When food supplies got scarce, they would move their herds to higher pastures in the hot summer or to warmer valleys in the winter.

Life was often difficult for shepherds who spent most of their time outside watching over the herd and often slept near their flock to protect it from robbers and wild animals. At night, they gathered their flocks into places called sheepfolds. These could be stone walls made by the shepherds or natural enclosures like a cave. Shepherds counted their flocks when they came into the fold at night by separating the sheep from the goats with a walking stick. They counted them again in the morning when they left for the pastures.

A flock often included both sheep and goats. Sheep are timid animals that need constant protection. Goats are harder to handle than sheep, because they like to climb up the rocky hillsides. Sheep produce wool for clothing and meat for special meals. Many sheep were also used for sacrifices at the temple in Jerusalem.

God gave a prophesy to Isaiah in the Old Testament, about Jesus the Good Shepherd who would one day come. God is pictured as a tender, compassionate Shepherd.

Isaiah 40:11 He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in his arms, holding them close to his heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young.

David wrote in the Psalms about how God was a shepherd to the Israelites in Old Testament times, leading them out of Egypt to the promised land. God protected them and provided for them.

Psalms 78:52-53 But he led his own people like a flock of sheep, guiding them safely through the wilderness.

John 10:16 I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd.

Questions and Activities

1. Who is the Shepherd that Isaiah wrote about?
2. In Psalm 78 the Bible talks about the Israelites being the sheep being led by God, the shepherd. Try and think of an example of how God protected or provided for them as they were being led from Egypt through the wilderness by Moses.
3. When Jesus came to earth, it was then not just the Israelites who were God's sheep. Who are the other sheep mentioned in John 10:16?

God is Provider / God is a Shepherd Week 3

The Lost Sheep and the Sheep Fold

Jesus told the story of a shepherd searching for a lost sheep.

Questions and Activities

The Lost Sheep – Luke 15:3-7

1. Read the parable of the Lost Sheep Luke 15:3-7.
2. Who are the lost sheep?
3. Who are the 99 sheep that the shepherd is prepared to leave, while he is looking for the one lost sheep?
4. What does this tell us about Jesus?
5. After the shepherd returns the sheep and comes home, what does he do?

The sheepfold - John 10:5-13

1. Read John 10:5-13
2. What was the sheep fold like? (See Week 2)
3. In John 10:5, give some examples of 'strangers' that might want to lead the sheep astray.
4. Why don't the sheep follow the stranger?
5. How do the sheep enter the sheepfold?
6. At what time of day did the shepherd herd the sheep into the sheepfold? Why this time of day?
7. In terms of the Christian life, what is the sheepfold?
8. From what kind of dangers does Jesus keep us safe? (verse 10)
9. Who is the gate of the sheepfold?
10. What happens when people try and enter by another way?
11. What is the similarity with Matthew 7:13? "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it."

God is Provider / God is a Shepherd Week 4

The shepherd provides.

God promises the things that a good shepherd was expected to provide:

The shepherd provides food and water:

Psalm 23:2 He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams.

Matthew 6:31-33 So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? ... your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

John 4:14 But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life.

The shepherd provides care and protection:

Psalm 23:4 Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.

Just as one of the characteristics of a Middle Eastern shepherd was his personal knowledge of his sheep, so we have a shepherd who knows and wants relationship with us:

The shepherd knows us personally

John 10:3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

John 10:14-15 I know my own sheep, and they know me, just as my Father knows me and I know the Father.

Luke 12:7 Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

Isaiah 49:16 See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me.

Luke 10:20 ...but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.

Questions and Activities

1. What does the shepherd provide for the sheep?
2. What do you trust God to provide for you?
3. What is the rod and staff that the shepherd carries in Psalm 23:4? What does the shepherd use it for?
4. Which Bible verse tells us that God knows us personally?

God is Provider / God is a Shepherd Week 5

Hearing the voice of the shepherd:

As the sheep knew the sound of their shepherd's voice, so our God wants us to hear His voice:

in John 10:3-5 Jesus says...the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ...he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice.

John 10:27-29 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me, for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father's hand.

The Good Shepherd is willing to sacrifice his life for the sheep.

John 10:11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Psalms 100:1-3

Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth! Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy. Acknowledge that the Lord is God! He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Questions and Activities

1. How do we get to know the voice of the shepherd?
2. What other voices are in the world today that could distract us from hearing God's voice?
3. How confident can we be that once we give our life to Jesus, he will not let us go?
4. If we wanted to remove ourselves from the sheepfold, could we do that?
5. Do you think that the people who were listening to Jesus tell the story of the Good Shepherd, actually knew what he meant by laying down his life for the sheep?
6. When did the meaning of John 10 become evident?