

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

For the week of August 11-17, 2024
"THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS"

GETTING STARTED

To the facilitator: Use this section to introduce the topic. If possible, give a brief recap of the sermon.

Share a memorable point, a spiritual lesson, a personal application, a question, or something that challenged you from the sermon last Sunday.

Have you ever received a reward or a prize for an accomplishment you did? What was the achievement and how did you feel about being recognized for what you have done?

GROUP DISCUSSION

Read **Matthew 25:31-46**.

1. When you think of Jesus, how often do you think of him as the Son of Man in his glory? How comfortable are you with this side of Jesus? How does knowing this side of Jesus affect our relationship with him?
2. When you picture a shepherd separating sheep and goats, what comes to mind? What impressions or details seem relevant to our understanding of the text? Does it make a difference in your thinking about what is going on if you think that sheep and goats are obviously different in many ways, or if you learn that sheep and goats may look very much alike?
3. Why were both the sheep and the goat surprised? Discuss the difference between "salvation by works" and the "good works" that God calls us to as his followers (see also to Ephesians.2:8-10 and James 2:14-26).
4. How is the Christian supposed to respond to this story? (e.g. should it motivate us to be more charitable? Should it make us secure in God's grace, or insecure about our eternal destiny, or ... ?) Why do you think that?
5. Does the standard of judgment in verse 40 seem gracious? Does the standard of judgment in verse 45 seem ungracious? Are they the same standard or different standards? How so? What are the implications for us of our answer?

6. What do you think is the connection between this story and Jesus' overall theme of the Olivet Discourse?
7. "Following Jesus and serving others are inseparable." Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

NEXT STEPS

- I will be attentive to the needs of people around me.
- I will make serving others a part of my life as a believer.
- I will check myself if I'm a genuine Christian (see 2 Corinthians 13:5)
- I will pray for discernment and direction as I seek to live out the message of the sermon today.

Don't forget to:

- Go through the devotionals every day this week.
- Have a regular daily time of prayer and reading of God's Word.

CLOSING THE SESSION

Close the session by taking the time to pray for one another. Consider the following as you pray:

- Pray for a deeper understanding of the seriousness and finality of God's judgment.
- Ask God to equip you with opportunities to serve those in need, both physically and spiritually.
- Pray for relationships to grow with other Christ-followers, that you will encourage and care for one another.
- Pray for your unsaved family, friends, and loved ones.
- Pray for protection, provision, healing and comfort for everyone who's going through physical, emotional, mental and spiritual pain.

BIBLE READING GUIDE

August 12	Matthew 25:31-46
August 13	Proverbs 11:21-24
August 14	Romans 12:9-11
August 15	Matthew 23:13-36
August 16	1 Timothy 4:6-16
August 17	Psalms 20:1-9
August 18	Habakkuk 3:11-19