

Bible reading John 10:1-10
Jesus the influencer

THIS WEEK WE EXPLORE WHAT IT MEANS TO KNOW AND BE KNOWN.

Jesus speaks of a shepherd whose sheep know his voice and follow him away from danger. The Pharisees do not understand that Jesus is referring to himself. He also says that he is the gate of the sheepfold, and whoever enters by him will be saved.



PLAY

Play a game of 'sheep drive'. Give everyone paper and a pen. The aim is to be the first to draw a complete sheep. Take turns to roll a die and draw the body part which corresponds to the result of the roll:
1 = body/2 = head/3 = legs (x4)/4 = tail/5 = ear (x2)/6 = grass. The first person to finish a sheep must shout 'baa'.

MAKE

You will need: digestive biscuits, white and milk chocolate, small sweets, icing pens, microwave and kitchen equipment, containers. Decorate two biscuits with faces: one for yourself and one to give away. Leave space round the edge to write 'I am loved' or 'You are loved' with icing pens. Try to find a suitable person to gift the other biscuit to, letting them know that Jesus knows and cares for them.

REFLECT



Listen to 'Forever yours', Nick and Becky Drake.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KEoNaSF00A>
Listen to the words and think about what it means to know and be known by Jesus.

Bible notes

This is the nearest John's Gospel gets to the parables found in the other Gospels. The story has a rich biblical hinterland. Moses (Exodus 3:1) and David (2 Samuel 5:2) were shepherds, and both Jeremiah and Ezekiel expected God to send wise and just rulers to shepherd his people once their exile in Babylon was over (Jeremiah 23:1-4; Ezekiel 34:23-24). Famously in Psalm 23, God himself is compared to a shepherd.

Jesus speaks in great detail of the relationship between shepherd and sheep. The shepherd knows them intimately, calling them by name and leading them into and out of the fold in the daily rhythm that guarantees them pasture and rest. The sheep are safe and secure because they are known and cared for, guided and protected throughout their daily routine. Like the best of Jesus' parables, this one is open-ended. What does it mean for Jesus to be the gate (v.7)? Who might the gatekeeper or the stranger be? Who are the sheep? What does it mean to know and be known? What does having 'life abundantly' entail? The story is sandwiched between the healing of the man born blind (John 9) and the raising of Lazarus (John 11). This suggests that 'knowing' is an image of pastoral care: healing, sustaining, keeping safe, even across the boundary between life and death. 'Being known' means feeling sufficiently confident and secure to follow Jesus into the wider world, trusting that he is able to bring out the best in life. The dynamic of knowing and being known is where Jesus' influence lies.

The broader background of the shepherding images warns against too narrow an interpretation. Jesus' ministry fulfils God's promise of faithful, just and wise leadership for Israel. What might this kind of 'knowing' and 'being known' look like in our day?

First impressions

- If Jesus were a modern-day influencer, what hashtags might he use?
- What does it mean for you to be known by Jesus?
- How does this influence or shape your life?



A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

Loving Saviour, you are the good shepherd,
the one takes care of us.
You offer us an abundant life.
Thank you for loving us. Amen.

Pray 



As the UK and Commonwealth prepare for the Coronation of King Charles III this week, pray that the King will use his influence wisely, drawing on the example of Jesus. His own mother's service was inspired by the shepherd king, epitomised in her favourite Psalm.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2HLnjXKcHg>