



For the Week of July 01, 2012

Good Questions, Straight Answers:
good news...eternally secure

Life Notes for Missional Communities

God's message for you: John 10:22-42

Pastor Ryan spoke this weekend about our security in Jesus. Those who know him are completely secure - safe in his hands. And nothing can separate us from his love. This is good news for eternity.

Remember that **Life Notes** are here to help you move Scripture into your heart and life as you hear from the Holy Spirit. Journal - a word, a phrase or a page. You'll see God at work in life-changing ways.

missional community suggestion

Facilitators: if possible, ask your community members to come to the meeting prepared by doing the following sections or **Daily Life Notes** before they arrive. For some who meet on Sunday or Monday, this might not be possible. As facilitators, come with an overview for those who are unable to do the work ahead of time. The questions offer ideas and suggestions, but please feel free to follow the Spirit's leading.

Life Notes are intended to be a starting point or reference as you facilitate conversation around the sermon content each week. Ideally, we pray each person who attends MISSION is daily living in God's Word. Know that we're here to help you with that conversation and don't hesitate to ask for any support you need.

for missional communities not doing life notes

Spend a few moments at the beginning or save time at the end of your meeting to review what the group remembers as Pastor Ryan's main sermon theme. Then respond to the following examen questions.

(To refresh your memory, when we share in "examen" together, we're asking the two extremes of a question: the most or the greatest and the least. This helps us look honestly at what is happening in our lives or how we are thinking/processing our relationships and experiences.)

Examen: *It is easier for me to recognize my shepherd's voice when...*
 It is more difficult for me to recognize my shepherd when...

This is something I believe God is talking with me about in my life right now.

It is challenging for me to respond because...

secure

This week, we're going to focus on our spiritual security. But spiritual security isn't something we can easily separate from physical, financial or relational security - this world's security in all its forms.

As you prepare your heart for this week's study, begin with some journaling...some soul-searching writing about a very important topic: security. The answers might be harder or more emotionally laden for some than for others - that's all right. We each have our story within God's story, and he knows us completely.

Examen: an examination of both sides of an issue or a question.

Examen: *Growing up, what made you feel secure or safe?*
Growing up, what made you feel insecure or unsafe?

Today, what makes you feel secure or safe?
Today, what makes you feel insecure or unsafe?

What behaviors do you exhibit when you feel unsafe or insecure?

Examen: *When or with whom are you a safe person for others?*
When or with whom are you not a very safe person for others?

What behaviors do you exhibit when you're not a very safe person for others?

What role does "trying to be in control" play in your daily life?

Spend time in prayer about what it means to be truly secure in God's love and care.

secure: the sound of the shepherd's voice

Pastor Ryan talked early in his sermon about the sheep's ability to hear and respond to the voice of the shepherd. The Pharisees seemed committed to trapping and disproving Jesus, while he was committed to loving and responding to them in truth. The Pharisees couldn't hear Jesus...they didn't recognize his voice...Jesus said they were not his sheep.

One of the most common questions we have for each other, for our pastors and mentors is, *"How do I know what God is saying to me?"* In other words, *"How do I hear the voice of my shepherd?"* and *"How do I rest securely in what my shepherd tells me?"*

We each have a "voice-print" - a vocal sound unique just to us. God also has a voice-print - his own unique sound that we know.

What is God's voice-print? How do we learn to recognize his voice?

Read John 10:3-5; 16; 22-30 at least two times and respond to the following statements in as many ways as come to mind for you. Feel free to go a different direction with your thoughts as God leads.

This is what Jesus specifically says about his relationship with his sheep...

This is how the sheep can know the shepherd's voice...

I think this is why the Pharisees weren't able to recognize the shepherd's voice...

I have heard and followed the shepherd's voice in these ways or at these times...
Here are some things I believe I'm hearing from God today but struggle to accept or follow...
This is how I specifically can recognize God's voice in my life - today...

secure: when life is hard

Perhaps one of the hardest sermons to preach is the one when someone is in terrific pain or has experienced deep loss. Pastor Ryan shared some of his own struggles and reviewed some of the challenges many of us have faced in our lifetimes: we have lost loved ones, our financial security has drastically changed, we have been fired or laid off, we have experienced broken relationships, our children have suffered in some way.

When life doesn't make sense...when God's way doesn't make sense...it is difficult for us to translate his voice in our lives.

Scott Peck, a popular secular psychologist from the 1980s, began his book with three words: life is difficult. And the book became a best-seller almost overnight. Life is difficult, but how we perceive the difficulties, their purpose in our lives and "the end result" makes all the difference.

Pastor Ryan took us to Romans 8 - a familiar passage to many of us where Paul says that nothing can separate us from God's love. He does not say, however, that we won't suffer. Jesus, as we'll see in later chapters in John, even prepares us for just the opposite - he promises that we will have trouble (John 16:33). We will have trouble. We will experience difficulties. We will experience loss and pain and disappointment and, perhaps, persecution. We just won't be overcome or defeated by our struggles. Jesus is the overcomer.

Read and study the following passages, and then come up with a paragraph or two to share with the group this week about how we can stay connected to God and hear his voice when we are struggling. Come up with your own sense of what is being taught in these passages. *Where is God's voice when we are hurting? What is he saying to us when we are struggling?*

Romans 5:1-5

1 Peter 1:3-12

2 Corinthians 4:1-18

2 Corinthians 5:1-5

Philippians 1:1-27

questions for group focus
secure: John 10:22-42

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Begin by reading John 10:22-42 out loud as a community. Then discuss what these passages teach about Jesus as our shepherd and how we truly experience that relationship.

As a group, honestly discuss the following two sources of security:

Historically and/or right now in life, I find myself looking to this _____ (person, place, milestone, situation, treasure, achievement) for security...

This is the kind of security Jesus offers...

Even though we can predict that there's a difference or even quickly lay out the differences in conversation, take time together to have a heartfelt conversation instead of offering the easy answers. Stop and hear your own thoughts for a moment. Hear from each other. Talk openly about security - where we look for it, how the security of this world feels versus the spiritual security we are promised, what we're afraid of as it relates to our security in this world.

Examen: *What do these two sources of security share in common?*
 What is different about these two sources of security?

If you have time, discuss the role that difficulty or suffering plays in the lives of sheep with their shepherd.

How does the shepherd care for the sheep during times of disappointment, loss, pain, suffering?

How can the sheep specifically take refuge in the shepherd's care during these times?

How, specifically, can our lives reflect our spiritual security while we are living here in this world?

How can we continue to recognize his voice as we live our lives in this world?

From *The Power and the Wisdom*, John L. McKenzie, 1965.

"The basic element seems to be recognition. We recognize that the person we have encountered speaks to our innermost being, supplies our needs, satisfies our desires. We recognize that this person gives life meaning. I do not say a new meaning, but meaning simply, for we realize that before we encountered this person life had no real meaning. We recognize that this person has revealed to us not only himself but our own true self as well. We recognize that we cannot be our own true self except by union with this person. In him the obscure is illuminated, the uncertain yields to the certain, insecurity is replaced by a deep sense of security. In him we find we have achieved an understanding of many things which baffled us. We recognize in his person strength and power which we can sense passing from him to us. Most certainly, if most obscurely, we recognize that in this person we have encountered God and that we shall not encounter God in any other way."

Next Week

To prepare for next week's sermon, read John 11 and pages 136-142 in Metzger's *The Gospel of John: When Love Comes to Town*. Email questions you might have on these passages in John to Pastor Mark at markc@mission68.org.