

Seeing Mankind in God's Perfect Mirror

by Annette Gullick , Copyright 10/1/2001

Lesson Three

Lesson Objective: That students understand God's view of mankind as presented in the Bible.

Bible Passage: Is. 53:6

Bible Truth: All humans have turned away from God and pursue sin but Christ died to provide a way for us to be saved.

Memory Verse: Is. 53:6

What you need: Slips of paper for each student assigning each a barnyard animal; a copy of handout "Baa, baa black sheep" for each student; copies of "In God's Mirror" verses to hand out to groups; two pieces of paper, a poor quality one that appears white but is really not when compared to the other piece which is "super white" or "brilliant white." This paper can be found in most large paper supply stores.

Opening Illustration: Kerry Livgren is an incredible musician. He played guitar and keyboards in one of the super bands of the 70's named KANSAS. (Stations still play their hits "Dust in the Wind" and "Carry on my Wayward Son.") He was so talented that he would later produce a solo album where he not only wrote all the songs and arranged the music, but played all the instruments, laying one track over another until it sounded like an entire band! But the incredible talent, thousands of screaming fans and plenty of money couldn't satisfy him. There was something inside of him that told him he'd never be happy until he found God and an assurance of the afterlife. We'll return to Kerry's life at the end of this lesson. But first we'll see that according to the Bible, we all find ourselves faced with the same problem Kerry faced.

A Word to the Leader

Opening:

Before class give each person a piece of paper with the name of a barnyard animal: sheep, horse, chicken, goat, pig, cow, etc. Ask the students to find the other animals of their same species and form a group. They may only communicate through actions

or sounds belonging to that specific animal; they may not talk. [Aim to end up with groups of 3 to 5 students, so if you have 20 students use 5 different animals. If you have fewer than 10 students have them end up in pairs rather than groups. It is possible to do this activity without the paper, by simply telling each student which animal they should be, but take care that the others don't overhear your instructions to each person.] Congratulate the winning team and after all teams are formed have students share with their group what animal they would like to be and why [for example, I would like to be a bird so I could fly.] When all have finished have them re-form the large group.

Ask for some people to share what animal they said they would like to be and why. Then ask for examples of animals that represent countries or professional athletic teams [for example, USA-eagle; Russia-bear; England-lion; Chicago Bulls; Denver Broncos] and explain that individuals and groups want to associate themselves with animals that have qualities like strength and power. Then ask what animal God compares us with most frequently [sheep.] Invite students to share what they know about sheep and fill in details they may overlook. [They cannot live on their own, but are dependent on their shepherds for survival. They are stupid; in their obsession with finding food they can wander off cliffs or get lost from the flock. They are endearing. They are useful, however their wool is more useful to others than to themselves.]

- *Do you think being called a sheep is a compliment, an insult, or a neutral description? Why?*
- *Can you see any similarity between yourself and what God calls you, a sheep? If so, what?*
- *Ask for students to review what was covered in the last lesson. [It can be confusing and painful to learn about ourselves from others because they to some degree distort the reality of who we are.]*
- *Why is it important for us to learn about ourselves from God? [His perspective about us is not warped. We can trust that what He says about us is the truth.]*

Interactive Learning

Many of us may not have spent much time around real sheep. We may only think of a cute white stuffed animal sitting on a child's bed. But for centuries throughout the world, sheep have been very important. They provide food and clothing and for the people of Israel they were important sacrifices to be offered to God. They are both more useful and more defenseless and stupid than household pets like dogs and cats. Dogs and cats can live wild; find their own food and even fight off enemies. But sheep can't find for themselves the food and water they need to stay alive, so they depend on their shepherd to lead them to food and water. Sheep can't defend themselves when they are attacked or help themselves when they get hurt or stuck. Because they are so dependent on their shepherd they grow to know and trust him. They come when he calls them, trusting that he is going to take care of them. We are going to spend the next few minutes thinking about how each one of us demonstrates some of these "sheepish" characteristics.

Hand out copies of "All We Like Sheep" and pens or pencils to the students. After they have filled it out say:

Last week we saw that although we can learn about ourselves from those around us, the "mirrors" of what they reflect to us are frequently distorted in some way. The only way to really know ourselves is to get used to looking at ourselves in a good mirror, so we can then tell what the distortions are in what we perceive from those around us. The one perfect mirror that we have is what God thinks about us, which we can learn about in the Bible. Let's spend a few minutes learning about God's view of mankind.

Bible Application

Divide the class into 7 groups [if possible, it is preferable to have them be the same groups as in the opening] and give each group one of the "God's Mirror" verse sheets. Ask them to look up the verses and to choose one of the verses that best summarizes the passages to share with the rest of the class and to write down on their paper the reflection of mankind seen in the verses, in other words how God's Word describes mankind. After the groups have finished writing their answers ask each group to share the verse and how these passages describe mankind. [Study the verses yourself prior to the lesson and use the notes below to help you guide the following discussion.]

	Verses	“Reflection” of Mankind
1	Gn 1:26, 27, 31; Psalm 139:13, 14	Mankind, as created by God and in his image is very good, fearfully and wonderfully made
2	Is. 46: 8-10; Rom. 9: 20-21	God is the creator and can do what he pleases with his creation
3	Gn 2: 15-17, 3:6-7; Romans 5: 12	Adam’s disobedience brought sin and death into the world and to all men
4	Gn. 6:5; Psalm 53:2-3; Is. 53:6	All mankind has turned it’s back on God and is sinful
5	Romans 1: 18-23, 29-32	All mankind is under judgment for their sin
6	Romans 3: 9-20, 23	No one is righteous, all have sinned
7	Jer. 17: 9; Is. 64:6	Our hearts are deceitful; what we think of as “good deeds” are really worthless

Write numbers 1 through 7 on a white board or a piece of paper and as each group gives their answers write them down beside their corresponding number [Always thank students for their participation, but gently bring out more complete answers from Scripture, ie. “and what does verse 16 add to that?”, if you see that their answer was not complete enough.] When all groups have finished review the answers and decide together whether each “reflection” is something pleasant or unpleasant, something people like to think about themselves or not. Put a smiley face beside the pleasant truth (#1) and a frowny face beside the unpleasant truths (all the rest.) Then ask:

- *Do you agree or disagree with what the Bible says about mankind? Why?*
- *Do you think most people in the world today agree with God’s perspective that mankind is sinful and deserves punishment? Why or why not?*

God created mankind in His own image and gave him life, physical provisions, significance, and a spiritual life of communion with Him. This is our positive heritage from creation. But Adam’s sin had far-reaching effects for all humanity. Adam and Eve were separated from God’s presence, which is spiritual death, and all their descendents, except Jesus who is God himself, have inherited this original sin, as it is called, and are born into this spiritual death. Just as Adam and Eve tried to hide from God in the garden, so all of their descendents, while they are spiritually dead, avoid God’s presence because it reminds them of their sin and the punishment they deserve. People like to think that they are independent and free to do whatever they want, but God says that they are His creation, dependent on him for life, breath, and everything else, and that they should acknowledge him as their creator and God, thank Him for what he gives them, and obey his commands.

Commitment

Ask the students to reform their groups according to their animals from the opening. Have each group prepare a song describing how the world responds to the reflection of themselves in God's mirror. They can base the tune on a commercial from TV or the radio if they want. Give them three to five minutes to prepare the song then have each group share theirs with the rest of the class. [note: all group members should participate in the presentation.]

After all groups have shared, hold up the off-white piece of paper and ask what color the paper is. It should be white enough that the students respond "white." Then hold up the "super white" or "brilliant white" piece of paper and now ask what color it is. Explain that we are like the off-white paper in that when we compare ourselves to those around us we think we are clean, pure, and good, but when we compare ourselves to God's standard we see ourselves as we really are, far from attaining the holiness and perfection that He requires.

Closing

ILLUSTRATION: This brings us back to Kerry Livgren, the super-successful member of the band KANSAS who was confused about God and heaven. When "Kansas" was on tour, they always flew from concert to concert. But Kerry suddenly developed an irrational fear of flying and had to ride on the bus with the back-up band. Well, God arranged things so that the lead singer of the back-up band was a strong Christian who knew how to defend his faith. So they began to carry on these day-long debates about whether or not the Bible was the Word of God. Finally, Kerry was convinced.

So one night, while he was alone in his hotel room, Kerry realized that he knew the truth about God and heaven. But it wasn't enough just to know the way. Now he needed to trust God and step over to the other side. So he gave his heart to Jesus that night. Well the next morning he took the elevator to the hotel lobby and when the doors opened, he heard Christmas music blaring away, in the middle of the Summer! "Joy to the world, the Lord is come, let earth receive her king...." In tears, he asked someone, what's with the Christmas music?" They answered, "Oh, it's something we do every Summer. We call it Christmas in July."

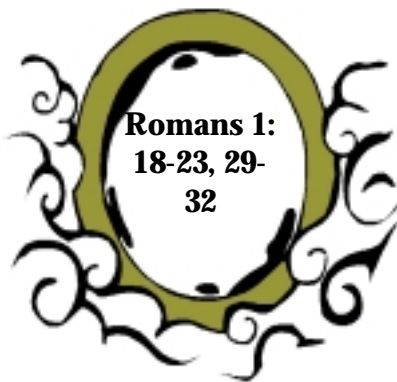
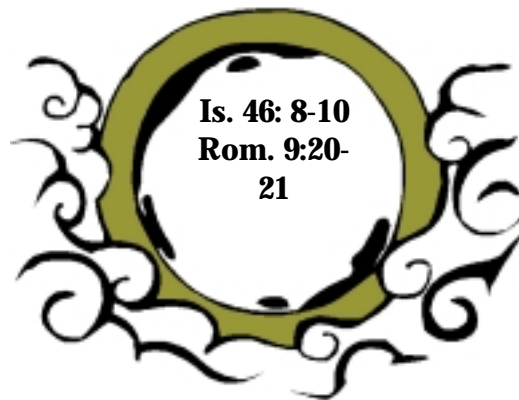
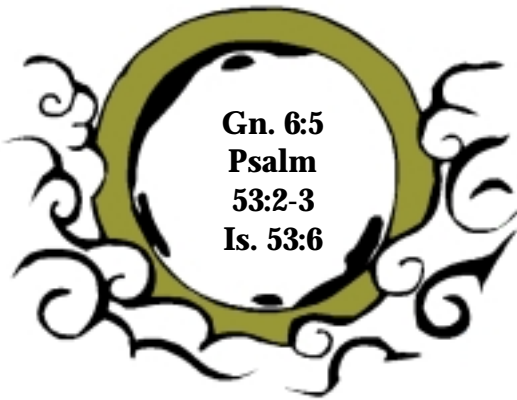
Some of you can identify with Kerry, because you've been searching just like him. You have no assurance that you know God and will go to heaven when you die. What can you do?

Pass out copies of handout "Sheep of His Flock." Use this time to explain how they can become a member of "God's Flock": explain the good news that despite our sin God loved us and provided a way for us to be forgiven of our sin and to enter into a relationship with him. Include in your comments Is. 53: 6 and other verses like Romans 5:8 and John 3: 16, providing for the students a clear explanation of how they

can come into a saving relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. You might even want to bring in the idea that unlike most animals who have short hair and so don't really get dirty, sheep's wool collects lots of dirt and brambles but unlike cats and even birds who frequently clean themselves, sheep have no way of cleaning themselves, but depend on someone else to shear them completely to clean them. Tie this in to the fact that we cannot clean ourselves from our sin but need Jesus to take it away for us. Give them a chance to respond to God in prayer.

Challenge those who already have a personal relationship with Christ to commit themselves to being "sacrificial lambs," offering their lives as living sacrifices to God. (Romans 12: 1.)

Have students close their eyes to give them a chance to respond to God in prayer. Close with a prayer of confession and thanksgiving.



Baa, Baa, Black Sheep Have You Any Wool?

Write beside each characteristic of sheep an example of how you demonstrate that characteristic in your life.

1) Are useful, a source of food and clothing.

2) Depend on their shepherd to lead them to the food and water they need to stay alive because their body only allows them a limited perspective of their surroundings.

3) Are vulnerable, need to be defended from attack and rescued from danger.

4) Aren't very smart and frequently get themselves into problems they can't get themselves out of.

5. Can be sacrifices pleasing to God.

We all, like
sheep, have
gone astray,

each of us
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Isaiah 53: 6



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