

# Small Group Guide: The Heart of a Shepherd

Based on Mark 6:30-44

## Opening Prayer & Icebreaker (10 minutes)

**Icebreaker Question:** Are you more of a "vacationer" (relaxation-focused) or a "traveler" (adventure-focused)? How does this show up in other areas of your life beyond trips?

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## Introduction & Context (5 minutes)

This week's passage shows Jesus and the disciples attempting to rest after intense ministry, only to be met by a massive crowd. The story reveals Jesus's heart of compassion and challenges us to examine our own hearts when our expectations aren't met.

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## Discussion Questions (30-40 minutes)

### Understanding the Text

1. **Read Mark 6:30-44 together.** What stands out to you most from this passage? What details do you notice that you might have missed before?
2. The disciples were exhausted and hungry, yet when they reached their destination, thousands of people were waiting. How do you think the disciples felt in that moment? Have you ever experienced something similar?
3. Jesus was "moved with compassion" when he saw the crowd. What does this phrase mean to you? How is compassion different from pity or sympathy?

### Going Deeper

4. The sermon mentioned: "When I forget Jesus's heart of compassion towards myself, his compassion towards others will feel like a threat." What does this statement mean? Have you experienced this in your own life?

5. The disciples asked Jesus to send the crowds away, but Jesus said, "You give them something to eat." Why do you think Jesus responded this way? What was he teaching them?
6. The sermon noted that the disciples "completely missed the outpouring of not only the power of Jesus, but the overflowing love of Jesus" because of their expectations. When have you been so focused on how you thought things should go that you missed what God was doing?
7. This miracle connects to the Exodus story and God's provision of manna in the wilderness. How does understanding this Old Testament background deepen your appreciation of what Jesus was doing?

## Personal Application

8. The sermon mentioned the "Goldilocks prayer problem"—thinking some things are too small or too big to bring to Jesus. Which way do you tend to lean? What does this reveal about how you view God's goodness?
  9. "When my compassion runs dry, it should operate as a dashboard indicator that I have misaligned my heart to the very heart of Jesus." What "dashboard indicators" in your life show when you're out of alignment with Jesus's heart?
  10. Jesus provided for both the spiritual hunger (teaching) and physical hunger (food) of the crowd. How does this challenge our tendency to separate "spiritual" needs from "practical" needs?
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## Key Takeaways (10 minutes)

Have group members share which of these resonates most with them:

- **Jesus's provision is not dependent on us getting it right** but flows from His compassion and character
  - **Jehovah Jireh** means "the Lord will see to it"—He is our provider who personally cares for His sheep
  - **When we internalize Jesus's compassion toward us**, it naturally overflows toward others
  - **There is no prayer too small or too big** to bring before Jesus
  - **Jesus knows His sheep personally** and His goodness is not just for others—it's for you
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## Practical Application (15 minutes)

## This Week's Challenge:

Choose one of the following to practice this week:

1. **Compassion Audit:** Each day, notice when your compassion runs dry. Ask Jesus to show you what you've forgotten about His heart toward you in that moment.
2. **Goldilocks Prayers:** Make a list of prayers you've been holding back (too small or too big). Bring them all to Jesus this week, one each day.
3. **Green Pastures Reflection:** Read Psalm 23 daily. Journal about how Jesus has been your shepherd in specific ways, providing what you need even when you didn't realize it.
4. **Compassion in Action:** Identify one person or situation that has frustrated you recently. Ask Jesus to help you see them with His compassion and take one practical step to respond differently.

## Accountability Questions:

- Who will you share your choice with to help you stay accountable?
  - How will you remember to practice this throughout the week?
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## Prayer Time (10-15 minutes)

### Guided Prayer Prompts:

- Thank Jesus for being the Good Shepherd who knows you personally
- Ask Him to help you understand His heart of compassion toward you more deeply
- Pray for alignment of your heart with His heart
- Bring before Him the "too small" or "too big" prayers you've been holding back
- Pray for specific people in your life who need to experience Jesus's compassion

**Close with this reminder:** "The compassion that moved Jesus towards that crowd is the same compassion that moves him towards you."

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## Before Next Week

- Read Mark 6:45-56 (the next passage in Mark)
  - Practice your chosen application
  - Come prepared to share one way you experienced or extended Jesus's compassion this week
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## Leader Notes

- Be sensitive to group members who may be in seasons of exhaustion or disappointment with God
- Create space for honest questions about times when God's provision looked different than expected
- Emphasize that Jesus's compassion is not earned—it flows from who He is
- If someone shares about running dry on compassion, affirm that recognizing this is the first step toward realignment