

SERMON OUTLINE

WHY IS THE CHURCH SO MESSED UP?

CLAYTON KEENON | NOVEMBER 8 & 9, 2025

EZEKIEL 34

When _____ You, God _____ You (Ezekiel 34:1-10)

When _____ You, God _____ You (Ezekiel 34:15-22)

When _____ You, God _____ You (Ezekiel 34:23, 24)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

FOR FAMILY, FRIENDS & GROUPS

Icebreaker: What's the worst experience you've had at a restaurant? What's the best?

1. Read Ezekiel 34:1-24 out loud. Give your group 3-4 minutes in silence to mark up their observations and questions. Go around the group and share your observations and discuss them.
2. Ezekiel uses shepherds and sheep as his central metaphor. What specific aspects of this relationship does the metaphor highlight? Why is this imagery particularly fitting for understanding church leadership?
3. Contrast the bad shepherds who "only take care of themselves" (Ezekiel 34:2) with what biblical leadership should look like. What's the fundamental difference in motivation and approach?
4. If you're in any position of leadership (parent, workplace, volunteer ministry, etc.), evaluate yourself using Ezekiel 34:2-4. Are you using your authority to serve or to benefit yourself?
5. Ezekiel 34:5-6 says sheep were "scattered" and became "food for wild animals" when there was no shepherd. How does this metaphor apply to people who leave because of church hurt? What specific "wild animals" (ideologies, movements, voices) prey on church-hurt people today?
6. In Ezekiel 34:7-10, God declares "I am against the shepherds" and promises to hold them accountable. What does this reveal about God's priorities and his relationship to both leaders and the vulnerable people in a church?
7. In Ezekiel 34:10, God says He will "hold them accountable" and "remove them from tending the flock." Apply this to church contexts. What should accountability for failed leaders actually look like?
8. Ezekiel 34:17-18 uses the metaphor of strong sheep trampling the pasture, muddying the water, and shoving other sheep. This is an image of how individuals in a community make things hard for others within the community. What are ways that people in a church make church inhospitable to others (intentionally or unintentionally)? How can you personally make sure you're contributing to a welcoming and healthy church community?
9. Count how many times God says "I myself" or "I will" in Ezekiel 34:11-16. What does this repetition emphasize about God's response when human leaders fail?
10. Contrast the failed human shepherds (34:1-10) with God's shepherding (34:1-16) and the promised Davidic shepherd (34:23-24). What makes each different?
11. The sermon identifies five categories of church hurt: disagreement, discord, disillusionment, dismissal, and domination. What do each of these categories mean? Why does it matter to distinguish between them?
12. The sermon describes three aspects of Christ Community's approach to a healthy leadership culture: shared leadership, proactive accountability, and consistent discipline. Which aspects of this were helpful for you to hear about? How do each of these contribute to a healthy church?
13. The sermon argues against "just love Jesus and skip the church." What is lost when someone pursues solo Christianity?
14. The sermon lists five healing steps: acknowledge, process, forgive, return, contribute. Which of these is the hardest? What happens if you skip one of the steps?
15. If you've experienced church hurt, is there one of these steps (acknowledge, process, forgive, return, contribute) you need to work on right now?

Prayer Prompt: Pray for someone you know who has been hurt by a church. Pray for our church to be healthy. Pray for it to be a place of healing for people who have been hurt.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS