

Read: Matthew 10:16-23

God Gives Us the Words

Matthew 10:16,19,20

"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Do you know that Jesus says a lot of comforting things in the Bible? Here's one, "Wherever two or three come together in my name, there I am with them." Here's another, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Or how about this one, "Take heart! I have overcome the world." Jesus loves to say beautiful things that give us hope and peaceful feelings. The list could go on and on!

Jesus' words today probably wouldn't make the list. "I'm sending you out like sheep among wolves." Why would he say that? Well, Jesus says things he knows we need to hear. There's a reason we need to hear that we are sheep who don't stand a chance against a pack of hungry wolves licking their chops. He's real with us. He doesn't sugarcoat things.

Jesus is warning us that following him as our shepherd in life means his enemies become ours. Many Christians are blessed with safety and security in the place that they live, but many Christians live in lands where faith in Jesus is a crime. Even those of us who live in countries with religious freedom still fight an uphill battle against those who deny Jesus. God wants us to know this. He doesn't say these things to scare us... he tells us these things so that we're ready!

But after warning us about the wolves in the world, Jesus doesn't simply pat us on the back and say, "All right, you're on your own now, go get 'em, kid." *He goes with us.* He sends his Spirit to equip us with his Word. His Father's protective hand is over us the whole way. Your job is to be bold and confess Jesus. God's job is to give you a powerful defense.

Maybe these words of Jesus make the list of comforting passages after all! Even though we live in a world full of wolves, we are safe because Jesus is forever our Shepherd.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Think of a way a sheep surrounded by hungry wolves might survive.
- How does that help you understand Jesus' words, "I'm sending you out like sheep among wolves"?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Were today's words of Jesus about sheep living among wolves frightening, or comforting?
- How does the promise of God's Spirit make you bold to confess Jesus?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Jesus once told us to be "shrewd as snakes." What does that mean?
- Right after telling us to be "shrewd as snakes," Jesus says to be "innocent as doves." How might a Christian be both of those things at the same time?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, my Shepherd, thank you for telling me what I'm up against in the world. Give me the wisdom and understanding to live as your sheep in the world. Give me the words to say and the confidence to say them. Amen.