

**LIFE GROUP GUIDE**  
**Good News Shoes #2: “Dancing Shoes”**

**CONNECT UP: give God an opportunity to speak to you through his Word**

- Please read Matthew 25:31-46.
- What is the context for this parable of Jesus?
  - *[Leaders’ note: One of your aims is to teach the people in your Life Group to study the Bible for themselves, so point out that a key principle of Bible study is to interpret each verse in the context of the wider chapter, each chapter in the context of the wider book, and each book in the context of its place in the Bible’s big story. This parable comes towards the end of Matthew’s Gospel, which was written primarily for the Jews. It is one of three parables in Matthew 25 which emphasise that when Jesus returns from heaven the big question won’t be whether or not we are Jewish, but whether or not we are waiting for the Jewish Messiah! Sheep = the True Israel (Psalm 78:52). Goats = false Israelites (John 1:47, Revelation 2:9 & 3:9).]*
- What is so radical about what Jesus teaches us in v32?
  - *[Leaders’ note: Many modern readers are shocked that Jesus warns us in v41 & 46 that he will send those who reject him to Hell along with the demons who have rejected his rule. For the original listeners to Jesus, this wasn’t shocking. Their far bigger scandal was that Jesus teaches here that people from non-Jewish nations can be sheep and Jews can be goats. In our case, he’s also saying that respectable members of Everyday Church can be goats, as in the big surprise of Matthew 7:21-23.]*
- Is this parable teaching us that our salvation depends on our good deeds – if we help the poor and needy, we’ll be saved when Jesus returns, but if we neglect them we will not? Read through the passage again slowly. What clues does Jesus give us about his meaning? (Focus on v40, see below for why!)
  - *[Leaders’ note: Definitely, definitely not! One of the reasons why we’re asking you to study this passage is to give you an opportunity to train your Life Group in how to study the Bible properly. Reading slowly really matters here. The difference between the sheep and the goats is how they treat those that Jesus calls “my brothers and sisters”. That’s language which is never used in Scripture for the people of the world, but only ever for those who have been saved and adopted into God’s family. Jesus is therefore saying that the litmus test of our salvation is how we relate to our Christian brothers and sisters. If we are truly saved, we will love our new family. If we’re not that bothered about our church family, we may not be saved.]*
- How does this parable therefore make you feel?
  - *[Leaders’ note: Jesus never wants to make Christians feel condemned (i.e. too ashamed to ask God to forgive them, Romans 8:1), but he does want to convict us of our need to change (i.e. hungry for God to make us much more like his Son, Matthew 5:6). If people find this parable difficult to read, therefore, encourage them with what Jesus says here and in Acts 9:4 – that he identifies so completely with every believer in your Life Group that it’s as if those who do good to them do good to him, and as if those who do evil to them do evil to him. Having laid this foundation of grace, you can then prod gently to see where people are convicted of a self-centred lifestyle towards God’s family. Christian love is counter-cultural for London!]*
- *[Leaders’ note: Apply these verses again in the next two sections...]*

**CONNECT IN: discuss the implications of what God says to you as a Life Group**

- What needs are there within this Life Group, both for those who are present and for group members who haven’t been able to join us today? What are our modern-day equivalents of the challenges that Jesus tells the sheep and goats that they had an opportunity to resolve?
- How are we meeting those needs within our Life Group? How can we live life together in such a way that Jesus will greet us as a Life Group of sheep, rather than a Life Group of goats?

**CONNECT OUT: discuss the implications for your interactions with the world around you**

- Read Ephesians 6:15. What needs are there within our friendships beyond this Life Group? How can we meet them individually and as a team? How can we pray for one another to go out from here with “your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace”?
- End with a time a prayer, rejoicing that Jesus carries this burden for us as we go (Matthew 11:28-30).