



# LESSON 10 ~ I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD

## John 10

### DISCUSSION STARTER

- What person, group or trend did you and your friends "follow" when you were a teenager? Why?
- What experience, if any, have you had with sheep and shepherds?

### INTRODUCTION

In John, chapter 10, Jesus uses the images of sheep, shepherds and sheep pens as he develops an illustration to explain the relationship he has with those who follow him. Jesus assumes his audience understands the scene he is describing. Since we, today, have limited knowledge of sheep and shepherds, some background information is helpful.

The sheep pen in Jesus' day was usually a rough stone wall about waist high, with no roof, or perhaps a cave in the hills. It had only one opening through which the sheep could pass when they came in for the night. The pen protected the sheep from wandering out as well as from thieves and wild animals getting in. When the sheep returned to the fold each night after grazing, the shepherd stood in the doorway of the pen and inspected each as it entered, giving what was needed; oil on a wound or scratch or water for the thirsty sheep.

After the sheep had all been counted and penned, the shepherd lay down across the doorway of the pen so that no intruder – man or animal – could enter without his knowledge. In this sense, the shepherd became the door or gate to the sheep pen. The door was the only "lawful" way to enter the sheep pen. Sometimes a guard or watchman was hired to be "the door" for the night if the pen held several flocks.

It was not unusual for shepherds to share pens. When morning came and it was time to go to pasture, each shepherd separated his sheep from the others by calling them with his particular call. Sheep were trained to only respond to the voice of their shepherd. After the shepherd gathered his flock, he led them (instead of driving them) out to graze. Wherever they went, the shepherd was in front of his flock providing guidance to the most abundant pastures as well as protection against any possible danger.

### PREPARATION

1. Before you read **John 10**, ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and guide you into all truth (John 16:13). You may want to make the following prayer your own:

*Spirit of the Living God, the One who comforts, strengthens and encourages me.*

*I admit that I cannot understand the truth found in God's Word with only my mind.*

*I agree that spiritual truth has to be understood with my heart as well as my head.*

*So I ask You to give me spiritual understanding as I do this lesson.*

*I pray that You would enable me to see, hear and understand,  
with my spirit, all that You want to teach me.*

*I ask this in the powerful Name of Jesus (as if Jesus were asking it).*

*Amen*

2. Read **John 10** slowly and thoughtfully in your own Bible. As you read and reread, **underline or highlight** any verses, phrases or words that are meaningful to you. Put a **question mark** beside anything you don't understand. Put a ✓ beside anything you would like more information about.

**You may also want to read this chapter in another translation.** The Scripture handouts for these lessons contain the *Amplified Version* of the Bible. It is important, however, that you don't try to answer the questions in the lesson from just the *Amplified Version*. The questions are phrased to be answered from the *New International Version* (NIV), the *New Living Translation* (NLT), or something similar.

## QUESTIONS

Read **John 10:1-21**.

1. In order to understand the illustration that Jesus uses of the sheep and shepherd, we must put ourselves in the minds of those whom Jesus was addressing. Not only did the Jewish people know a lot about sheep and shepherds from everyday life, this image was also prominent in Old Testament Scripture. Read the following verses from the Old Testament and state the identity of the shepherd and the sheep as the people of Jesus' day would have understood it.

**Who is the shepherd?**

**Who are the sheep?**

**Psalm 23:1 -**

**Psalm 80:1-2 -**

**Isaiah 40:9-11 -**

**Ezekiel 34:11-13 -**

2. Not only was God the Shepherd of his people Israel, but he also gave the care of his people over to kings, prophets, priests. They, too, were to act as shepherds over God's flock. According to **Ezekiel 34:1-10**, how does God identify a bad shepherd and what will he do about it?
3. God made a promise to his people who had been subjected to bad shepherding. What, generally, was the promise from **Ezekiel 34:11-16**?
4. How, specifically, will God fulfill this promise according to **Ezekiel 34:23-24** and **Jeremiah 23:5-6**?
5. Based on these Old Testament Scriptures, what are at least two things Jesus was inferring that the crowd would have understood when he declared, "I am the good shepherd"(10:11)?
- ♥ With your small group, mention all of the connections you see between **Ezekiel 34** and **John 10:1-21**.
- ♥ If you were in the crowd when Jesus related this analogy of sheep and shepherd (10:1-15), what parts of the illustration would you probably have seen as positive? What parts could be seen as negative?
6. List the four main characters in Jesus' illustration found in **John 10:1-5**.

The *watchman* or gatekeeper cannot be identified with any particular person; rather, the word illustrates Jesus, the good shepherd, coming at the right time and in the right way. *Thief* and *robber* are words for different kinds of false leaders. *Thief* implies **subtlety** and **trickery**; *robber* implies **violence** and **plundering**.

- ♥ **Chapter 10** of John opens with Jesus suddenly speaking of a thief and robber trying to get into the sheep pen. Jesus doesn't seem to identify the thief/robber, but since the original text did not have chapter breaks, who was Jesus probably talking about (9:40-41)?
  - ♥ Who, today, would you identify as thieves and robbers trying to harm the flock?
7. Jesus paints a sharp contrast between the good shepherd and the bad shepherd. Fill in the chart below to discover their differences.

Differences in:	The Bad Shepherd	The Good Shepherd
<i>Entering the sheep pen</i> 10:1-3		
<i>Voice</i> 10:3-5		
<i>Motives</i> 10:10		
<i>Actions</i> 10:11-13		

- ♥ Think back to the actions of the Pharisees and religious leaders in previous chapters (especially in **chapters 5 and 9**). How did their attitudes and actions confirm Jesus' statement that the thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy?
  - ♥ Give an example of how a pastor, priest or church leader might display the traits of a bad shepherd.
8. Jesus considers himself the *good* shepherd. *Good* carries the connotation of *beautiful, useful, noble, wholesome, competent* and *morally good*. List some specific ways Jesus wants *you* to benefit from the Good Shepherd's care.
- 10:3-4 -**
- ♥ How do you recognize Jesus' voice when he speaks to you? How do you know an imposter's voice?
  - ♥ What does it mean that Jesus calls you by name? Is that important to you? Why or why not?
  - ♥ Are you following the Good Shepherd? Where do you struggle with wanting to follow your own path?
- 10:9-10 -**
- ♥ What does Jesus mean when he says his sheep will be "saved" (10:9, 28)?
  - ♥ Do you look to Jesus as your sole provider, security and caretaker (10:9)? What are some things that compete with your trusting him?
  - ♥ **John 10:10** has been translated *life to the full, living life to the full, having life more abundantly, life in all its fullness* and *far more life than before*. Describe what you think Jesus means.
  - ♥ To what degree is this quality of life a reality to you? What qualities in your life might convince an unbeliever that you possess the full life Jesus gives? How might you experience this abundant life to a greater degree?
- 10:14-15 -**
- ♥ What are some examples of the way that Jesus knows you? How well do you know Jesus?

- ♥ How intimate (having a close, personal relationship) does Jesus expect to be with his sheep (10:15)? On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your intimacy with Jesus? How do you feel about Jesus' desire for intimacy with you?
  - ♥ Why is it necessary for the Good Shepherd to lay down his life for his sheep (Isaiah 53:6)? What is the Shepherd's motivation (1 John 3:16)?
  - ♥ What claim is Jesus making when he says he has the authority to lay down his life and to take it up again (10:17-18)? Why does Jesus stress that he lays down his life voluntarily (10:18)?
9. The Pharisees, religious leaders and the Jewish people considered themselves part of God's flock because they were descendents of Abraham and God's chosen people (John 8:33, 39, 53). In the verses below, how did Jesus redefine the flock of God?

**John 10:7,9 -**

**John 3:16 -**

**John 14:6 -**

**Ephesians 3:12 -**

- ♥ If you would like to be included in the flock of the Good Shepherd and experience all the benefits of flock life, what would you have to do to "get in"?
  - ♥ Jesus says he is the gate or door to the sheep pen and the only way to God the Father. How would you respond to someone who says such a teaching is offensive because it is "narrow" and "exclusive"?
  - ♥ Do you personally believe that Jesus is the "good" shepherd? How can a person say Jesus is a good shepherd when bad things happen to them?
10. Who are the *other sheep not of this pen* that Jesus speaks of in 10:16, who will also be brought into the flock? (Matthew 28:19, Romans 1:16 and Revelation 7:9-10 may help you in your answer.)

- ♥ What do you think Jesus means when he says that there will be *one flock and one shepherd* (10:16)? Is this a reality now? What are the implications of Jesus' statement for you and other Christians who belong to other denominations and churches?
- ♥ If you consider yourself a sheep belonging to the Good Shepherd, what will characterize your life (10:27)? Does it?
- ♥ Why do you think Jesus' listeners respond as they do in 10:19-21? How have you responded to Jesus?

## **response**

Respond to one of the following questions:

- ♥ From what you see in this chapter, what does it really mean to follow Jesus?
- ♥ What strikes you as being most significant about the shepherd's relationship to the sheep?
- ♥ List the things which Jesus, the Good Shepherd, has done for you. Take time to thank and praise him.

## **Encounter with Jesus**

Take a few moments to be still and quiet in the presence of Jesus. Using Psalm 23 as a setting for your encounter with Jesus, picture yourself with Jesus in green pastures or beside quiet waters. What are some things from this lesson that a shepherd does for his sheep that you would like Jesus to do for you? Write a prayer asking Jesus to be your Good Shepherd so that you may experience these things.

Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus and ask him to speak to you. Write down what you hear him say. Thank him for being the Good Shepherd who was willing to give his life for you, his lamb.