

### The One Who Wants to be Your Shepherd

**Drawing Near:** *Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for He is our God and we are the people of His pasture, the flock under His care. Psalm 95:6-7.*

John 10:1-21 is a continuation of the dialogue between Jesus and the religious leaders that began in 9:40-41. The blind beggar had just been put out of the fold of his synagogue (9:34), so Jesus speaks of His fold, which the beggar had now entered (9:35-38).

This passage is rich in spiritual truths for anyone seeking intimacy with the Lord. In order to get the full impact of Jesus' words careful observation is necessary. This section of Scripture is considered an allegory, which is different than a parable. In an allegory each item has a corresponding significance. As a good teacher Jesus draws upon the familiar images of shepherding that were very much a part of the culture during biblical times.

1. **Thoughtfully read and reread John 10:1-18.** Below tell what you think each of the following elements of the allegory represents. Keep in mind the overall context of the Gospel of John as well as the immediate context of chapter 10.

the good shepherd =  
the sheep pen =  
the gate =  
the gate keeper =  
the hired hand =

the sheep =  
the other sheep =  
the pasture =  
the thief and the robber =  
the wolf =

2. How did Jesus begin His sermon (10:1a) and to whom was He speaking (John 9:40-41)?
3. The opening statement is not about the shepherd but the intruders who would disrupt the peace and safety of the sheepfold. How may the thieves and robbers be recognized (John 10:1, 10a and Ezekiel 34:2-10)?
4. By what means were the priests and Pharisees trying to enter the sheep pen (10:7-8)?

Jesus continued to point out several things about first-century shepherding that illustrated His ministry. The scene of a shepherd enclosing His sheep in a sheepfold and leading them out gives us one of the most moving pictures of the close relationship between the sheep and the shepherd.

*Quiet your heart and take a few minutes to meditate on verses 2-6.*

5.
  - a. How does the intimacy of a shepherd and his flock illustrate the trust, familiarity and bond that exist between Jesus and His followers?
  - b. By themselves sheep have no ability to find food, water, shelter or protection. So following the shepherd was an absolute necessity. In what ways are Christians utterly dependent on the Shepherd of their souls? Isaiah 53:6, 64:6; and John 15:5c provide a few examples.
  - c. Why will sheep never follow a stranger (verse 5)?
  - d. How are you able to distinguish the difference between the Good Shepherd's voice and the voices of imposters (10:3-5, 14)?

While Jesus' audience was intimately familiar with the sheep/shepherd analogy they failed to grasp the full significance of His words (verse 6). Jesus continued to speak to them by way of an *illustration* and *application*, breaking through the familiar imagery to reveal His true identity.

**Reread John 10:7-10.** Notice the shift from the general third person used in the previous section ("he," "him," "his,") to the very specific first person singular ("I," "me").

6. What is the basic meaning of Jesus' words to us and to His original audience? Take into account the "I am" statements in verses 7 and 9.

7. Contrast the purpose of the thief with the purpose of Jesus our Shepherd.

**Personal Reflection:** What qualities in your life might convince an unbeliever that you possess the full life Jesus speaks about in verse 10?

*John has already described Jesus as the source of living water and as the bread of life. Now, within the metaphor of sheep, Jesus provides the pasture of life. And that pasture is abundant; it provides all that is needed and fully satisfies.*

As the discourse continued (verses 11-18) Jesus revealed more of Himself. His language was plain to those whose eyes were opened by the Spirit.

8. To emphasize the contrast between Himself and the false shepherds of Israel, Jesus identified Himself as \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 11a, 14a).
9. Using a dictionary or thesaurus list as many synonyms as you can for the word “good.”

*Note: Our Lord’s goodness was inherent in His nature. To call Him “good” is the same as calling Him “God.”*

10. What two major aspects of Jesus’ ministry as Good Shepherd did He reveal in verses 10b, 11b, 15, 17-18? How are they related?
11. Summarize Jesus’ description of the “hired hand’s” behavior (verses 12-13).

That Christ is our personal Shepherd is one of the most exciting and motivating truths in Scripture. Because of the predominant theme of shepherds, sheep and lambs throughout the Old Testament, we understand that this imagery is very close to the heart of God. Perhaps nothing in human terms could represent the intimate bond that exists between the Lord and His people better than this image of a shepherd and his sheep.

12. From the following passages lift out one or two promises that you can use to strengthen your own faith or to encourage another Christian who may be struggling.  
Psalm 23

Isaiah 40:11

Luke 15:3-7

13. **Read John 10:19-21.** What two opposite conclusions did people continue to draw even though Jesus’ witness to His deity was consistent and clear?

Jesus’ *last* public encounter with the Jews in John’s gospel (10:22-42) is set against the backdrop of another Jewish festival. **Read verses 22-42** several times to get a sense of this amazing scene. Use a Bible dictionary or another resource to learn about the Feast of Dedication.

14. This section is built around two basic questions concerning the identity of Jesus. (See verses 24 and 33.) Briefly describe the issues with which Jesus was being confronted.
15. In light of verse 31, do you believe the Jews honestly meant what they said in verse 24? Why or why not?
16. There was an ominous warning in Jesus' words as He responded to their challenge. What was the ultimate reason the Jews did not understand who Jesus was (verse 26)?

Jesus had spent the last three years demonstrating who He was through His great miracles, but they were only appreciated and understood by the "sheep." Jesus continued to disclose truths that were precious to believers but infuriated the Jews. Prayerfully consider **John 10:27-30**.

17. From these verses list the promises/guarantees the Good Shepherd makes to His sheep. *Reflect on the parallel statements in verses 28 and 29 and the unity of the Father and Son as they work in concert to guard our eternal security (verse 30).*
  18. How will the promises Jesus makes in these verses help you when you have doubts about your salvation?
- After Jesus made His great assertion, "I and the Father are one" the Jews were standing there with stones ready to kill Him!
19. Consider what Jesus does when threatened with imminent death (verses 31-38). What do you learn about Jesus' character from this incident?
  20. What is the main point of Jesus' argument in verses 34-36?
  21. How do we know that Jesus' bold claims are true and not blasphemous (verses 37-38)?

In this passage we are reminded of the important link between what we say and what we do. Jesus constantly challenged His adversaries to consider the relationship between His words and His works. He also rebuked the Pharisees for their lack of consistency in these matters.

Reflect on areas in your life where you see inconsistencies in your profession and your practice.  
22. What can you do this week by God's grace to begin to resolve these inconsistencies?

***In verse 39 the Jews made another attempt to seize Jesus but He escaped their evil clutches once again. It was not yet His appointed time to die for His sheep.***

**Verses 40-42** wrap up this section of the Gospel of John and bring it to a close. "The fact that Jesus departed Jerusalem and went back to the place where John the Baptist first baptized is seen as a symbolic journey. Jesus' departure signals His abandonment of Jerusalem and His return to the site where John first baptized. The subsequent good reception symbolizes a new, spiritual entity taking root among the outsiders of Judaism. Jesus went to the people who had heard John the Baptist proclaim Jesus' coming. Now they saw this Messiah face to face, and many *believed* in Him. What they now heard and saw in Jesus confirmed in their mind the genuineness of his forerunner's proclamations. Jesus stayed with these believers until it was time, once more, to return to Jerusalem where He would face death." - Comfort

23. For you personally, what is the most reassuring truth in John chapter 10, and why?

24. How has Christ shown Himself to be the Good Shepherd in your life circumstances?

*May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing His will, and may He work in us what is pleasing to Him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Hebrews 13:20-21*