



**Sunday School Lesson Summary for February 4, 2007  
Released on Wednesday, January 31, 2007**

**"Jesus Is the Good Shepherd"**

**DEVOTIONAL READING: Isaiah 40:10–14.  
BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: John 10:1–18.  
PRINTED TEXT: John 10:1–5 and 10:7–18.  
READ: John 10:1–18.**

**TIME: A.D. 29  
PLACE: Jerusalem**

**GOLDEN TEXT: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep" (John 10:11 NKJV).**

**HOW TO SAY IT**

Ezekiel. Ee-ZEEK-ee-ul or Ee-ZEEK-yul.  
Pharisees. FAIR-ih-seez.  
Siloam. Sigh-LO-um

**LESSON TEXT**

**John 10:1-18**

**The Shepherd and His Flock**

1"I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber.

2The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep.

3The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

4When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.

5But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."

6Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them.

7Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep.

8All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.

9I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.

10The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

11"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

12The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it.

13The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

14"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—

15just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.

16I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

17The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again.

18No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

## **LESSON AIMS**

**After participating in this lesson, each student will be able to:**

1. Examine passages in John that portray Christ as the good Shepherd.
2. Show how Christ is indeed the good Shepherd.
3. Encourage Christians to realize that they have a good Shepherd who loves and cares for them.
4. Understand that Jesus is not only our Life-Giver, but also our Life-Sustainer, inasmuch as He is the good Shepherd for His sheep.
5. Be convinced that Jesus cares deeply about us as individuals.
6. Decide to rely on Jesus as our good Shepherd by casting all our cares on Him and knowing He cares for us.

## **LESSON OUTLINE**

- I. **THE DOOR (John 10:1–5 and 7–10)**
- II. **THE GOOD SHEPHERD (John 10:11–18)**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Today's lesson is one that repeats that Jesus (and the Bible) likens Christians to sheep. This is probably not a major concern unless you consider the fact that traditionally sheep are thought to be one of the *dumbest* animals alive. While they are rather highly dependent on human intervention for protection from predators, feeding, guidance, shearing, etc., it is amazing to learn that they are on the otherwise not so "dumb" after all.

It was interesting to learn that sheep also possess the following characteristics and behaviors: with other sheep they are very gregarious or sociable animals; they will follow one another anywhere considered safe; they willingly gravitate towards another sheep or other object that looks like them; due to instinct, they will maintain a slight distance between themselves and others that do not look like them; they naturally lack aggressive behavior; because of their dull teeth and heavy woolly bodies, they are nearly defenseless to predators like wolves and dogs; for the same reasons listed just previously, in water, they are sure to drown if their wool is saturated and becomes too heavy; they feel safe when in numbers; their tracks will never be found in a straight line because when they walk, they look with each eye behind them for predators; if turned over on their backs (culled) they are unable to right themselves without human help and will soon perish; they are easily frightened by loud noises like dog barks and fireworks; they have a wide angle of peripheral vision for detecting predators but cannot see immediately in front of their noses; they have good sense of smell and hearing; and finally, they have a high tolerance for pain.

While most of this is new and fascinating information to us, the fact remains that like sheep, Christians are open prey to the enemy without the protection, guidance, and overall spiritual shepherding of Jesus Christ. Although we have what we consider to be natural instincts for self-survival, we are no match for our spiritual predator without the intervention and salvation of Jesus. Thanks be to God that He gave believers a good Shepherd to provide us with our every need!

## **QUESTIONS**

### **I. THE DOOR (John 10:1–5 and 7–10)**

#### **1. What was the metaphor Jesus used in teaching about His care for His own people? (John 10:1–3)**

Jesus used the metaphor of a shepherd and his flock and the protective surroundings provided for them at the end of the day. A sheepfold (v. 1) was an enclosure, either round or square, with a high wall around it and sometimes a thorny vine stretched across the top. There was just one entrance, an open door in which the shepherd usually slept, acting as a protective barrier.

## **2. What causes sheep to follow their shepherd but to flee from those who are not? (John 10:3)**

Shepherds in the Western world usually drive their sheep from behind, often with the assistance of sheepdogs. Shepherds in the Middle East, however, lead the sheep—calling their names and encouraging them to stay with them. It is the soothing voice of the shepherd that gives the sheep a sense of security. Jesus explained that it is the recognition of the shepherd's voice that causes the sheep to follow him.

When an unknown voice calls them, however, the sheep do not recognize it and will flee as if unexpectedly encountering danger. The sense of security is not present when a stranger calls; so the sheep will not follow him. This does not necessarily have to be a thief or robber; it is merely the fact that a strange voice calls and causes fear in the sheep.

## **3. What was Jesus claiming when He referred to Himself as the Door of the sheepfold? (John 10:7–9)**

Jesus identified Himself in verse 7 as the Door, indicating that He is the protector or those who follow Him. We should note that sometimes the shepherd will sleep across the doorway of the sheepfold holding area—acting as a barrier of protection against wild animals or thieves. Jesus now identified Himself as that protector.

In Jesus' case, though, He is not only the protector, but also the entryway into the family of God! His statement "I am the door of the sheep" is the third of seven "I am" statements in John. It reminds us of His statement in chapter 14, where He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by me" (vs. 6). Just as a sheepfold had only one entrance, so the family of God and heaven has just one means of entrance. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only means of entering eternity with God.

## **4. What two ministries does Christ fulfill as the Door?**

Jesus says in verses 7–9 that He is the true shepherd and the Door that provides entry for the sheepfold; in other words, He is the only way to salvation. Since shepherds were known to lie down and sleep at night across the entrance of the sheepfold to deter the entrance of wild beasts and prevent the sheep from exiting, Jesus was saying that He was not only the keeper of the sheep but was also the protector. Jesus gives spiritual life and food to His sheep. He is Savior and Provider.

## **II THE GOOD SHEPHERD (John 10:11–18)**

### **5. How did Jesus characterize the religious leaders who were refusing to listen to Him? (John 10:8–13)**

In these verses, Jesus mentioned false teachers who can do nothing more than destroy the lives of their followers. He said the thief steals, kills, and destroys. Jesus, on the other hand, has come so that people can have meaningful life, eternal life, and abundant life. The word translated "abundantly" is *perissos*, which means to have a quality of life that is superabundant or superior in every way. It means to have more in life than enough, making it full and abundant.

### **6. Why do we believe that Jesus is the only means of salvation, and why do some people reject that? (John 10:9–10)**

For emphasis Jesus repeated His claim to be the Door and added that it was through Him that people could find spiritual nourishment. These two verses show again that Jesus is the only way of salvation. To many, this is seen as a very narrow position.

There are those who like to think there are many ways of getting to heaven. They resist the idea that sinners need a Saviour and do not like to accept the fact that their sinful living is not morally right.

Biblical teaching, however, is clear that Jesus is the only means of salvation provided by God. We have already seen this in Jesus' statement in John 14:6. No one can become part of God's family except through belief in His Son, Jesus, who died in order to pay the price of our redemption. Upon receiving Him, we are saved from the penalty of our sin and are given an inner strength to live above sin. Salvation is deliverance from hell and a guarantee of eternal life in heaven.

### **7. What is the fourth "I am" claim of Jesus in John? (John 10:11–13)**

Verse 11 contains Jesus' fourth "I am" claim where He says that He is the good Shepherd. It is a contrast to a woe pronounced in Zechariah 11:17, which says, "Woe to the worthless shepherd, who leaves the flock! A sword shall be against his arm and against his right eye; His arm shall completely wither, and this his right eye shall be totally blinded." The word "worthless" is also translated as "good for nothing" or "idol." God said that the arm and the eye that should have provided protection will both be destroyed.

Jesus is the good Shepherd, one who is morally good, beautiful, valuable, virtuous, and the model of perfection. As opposed to that good-for-nothing shepherd in Zechariah, Jesus as the good Shepherd will give His life for the sheep.

### **8. Why did Jesus say the hired help would not stay and protect the sheep in time of danger? (John 10:12–13)**

None of the false shepherds referred to previously, including the present religious leaders, would ever consider giving their life for their followers. They were more like the hired help, who had no ownership of the sheep and so did not care enough about them to face danger for them.

Jesus said that when the hireling sees danger approaching, he will run to save his own life. He is nothing more than a wage earner and has no interest in risking his life for what is not truly his anyway. The hireling was different from the religious leaders in that he did not deliberately mislead the sheep and put them in dangerous situations. He just happened to get caught in a situation that threatened his life, and someone else's sheep were not worth that risk to him. Jesus, however, was committed even unto death.

### **9. What did Jesus claim about knowing His own? What was His model? (John 10:14–16)**

As noted before, a Middle Eastern shepherd knows and calls every one of his sheep by name, and they in turn will follow him because they recognize his voice. Similarly, as the good Shepherd, Jesus knows everyone who is His and they know Him. The fact that He knows us indicates His ownership and personal interest in each one of us. The fact that we who are His sheep know Him indicates a reciprocal knowledge that gives us the privilege of having an intimate relationship with Him.

The model for this intimate, loving relationship is the relationship Jesus has with His Father. His Father knows Him intimately, and He in turn knows His Father. That very relationship is what led Jesus to be willing to lay down His life for His sheep. His sacrifice is what makes it possible for us to become part of God's family. Here Jesus made very personal a statement He had made previously in verse 11.

There He had said, "The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep." In verse 15, He plainly says, "I lay down my life for the sheep."

### **10. What is unique about the death and subsequent life of Jesus? (John 10:17–18)**

Everything Jesus has done for His sheep has been in accordance with His Father's will, including His substitutionary death. You must recognize that Jesus' death was voluntary. Four times He said that He laid down His own life; no one took it from Him (vss. 11, 15, 17, 18). While Satan might have viewed Jesus' death on the cross as a victory for himself, the truth is that no earthly or angelic authority or power was able to take Jesus' life without His willing submission.

Furthermore, His timing was according to His Father's will. We saw last week that when Jesus was teaching in the temple, no one laid hands on Him, for "his hour was not yet come" (John 8:20). As a result of this willingness on the part of Jesus to accomplish His Father's will, God has a special love for His Son. This loving relationship that exists between the Father and His Son is an example of the relationship we ought to have with God and with other believers.

Jesus not only claimed He was going to voluntarily give up His life; He also claimed to have the power to take it back again. His statement was a claim of authority. He had the authority from God to give His life and to take it back after the work of redemption had been completed. Only God has such power and authority; so once again we see that Jesus is deity. He is just as much God as is His Father.

### **CONCLUSION**

Very often we are told (especially in advertisements) that it's bad to be "just one of the crowd." We are supposed to let our individuality stand out. We like to think of ourselves as independent individuals who don't need to rely on anyone else. At the same time, however, it is very comforting to be a member of a group in which we can feel safe and at home. The hit television show *Cheers* (which ran from 1982 to 1993) portrayed a group of close friends at a small bar in Boston. That bar was a place "where everybody knows your name." That was an important part of the show's appeal: it illustrated the type of place that many of us long to find. A place to be "one of the gang." A place to be accepted for who one is.

The sad thing about that television program is that so many people seek these types of relationships in bars rather than in churches. While we are all individuals, together we make up Jesus' flock as we follow his voice. He knows each of our names, and we each have a special place in his family. In him we find an eternal peace and comfort that the world cannot provide.

In this lesson, we are reminded that Jesus' teaching resulted in division among the people of His day. Some believed, while others doubted—the same responses we see from people today.

### **PRACTICAL POINTS**

1. We can be sure that our good Shepherd will care for our every need (John 10:1–2).
2. We must learn to recognize the voice of Jesus and follow only Him (vss. 3–5).
3. There is great liberty for those who are in Him (vss. 7–9).
4. False gospels serve only to destroy the soul (vss. 10–13).
5. The relationships between the Father, the Son, and the believer are intimate ones (vss. 14–15).
6. The gospel invitation is not exclusive (vs. 16).
7. Christ's death was no accident but a conscious act on His part to secure our redemption (vss. 17–18).

### **THOUGHT TO REMEMBER**

Jesus still shepherds us today.

### **PRAYER**

Lord, we know that you call to us in every situation; help us to hear your voice. We live in a world with many false ideas and self-serving teachers. Sometimes it's hard to know what's right. Keep us focused on the one who gave his life for us. In Jesus' name, amen.

### **ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON**

In preparation for next week's lesson (February 11, 2007), you should study John 11:1–44. The time is A.D. 30, and the place is Bethany. The Golden Text is John 11:25, and the subject is "**Jesus Is the Resurrection and the Life.**" This lesson will teach through Jesus' raising of Lazarus that He is the Resurrection and the Life. *Good studying!*

### **LESSON SUMMARIZED BY**

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