


# Jesus Teaches About the Good Shepherd

**SESSION IN A SENTENCE:** Jesus declared that He is the good shepherd who knows and cares for His sheep and who lays down His life so they might live.

**BACKGROUND PASSAGE:** John 10:1-21

If you have ever watched a crime drama television show, no doubt you have witnessed the interrogation technique “good cop, bad cop.” Outside of the interrogation room, two officers debate who will play which role. The “bad cop” aims to be stern and harsh, even threatening, while the “good cop” tries to develop a rapport with the suspect, demonstrating a compassionate and level-headed demeanor in contrast to the “bad cop.”

 Which role would you prefer to play: “good cop” or “bad cop”? Why?

# Group Time

## Point 1: Jesus is the gate that leads to abundant life (John 10:7-10).

<sup>7</sup> So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. <sup>8</sup> All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. <sup>9</sup> I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. <sup>10</sup> The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

The Pharisees led people away from a true relationship with God by their additional rules and false, human-centered interpretations of the law. But Jesus offered Himself as the way into eternal life and community with the Father and His sheep—He is the gate. If you want to enter into the flock of God and into communion with the Father, you have to go in by way of Jesus, who said: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).



How can we identify “thieves and robbers” that threaten the flock of God today?

As the gate, Jesus grants us safety from all the enemies that would destroy us for eternity in hell: sin, shame, and death. We are saved when we enter God’s presence by Christ. But we aren’t *just* saved in the past or for the future. Imagine sheep sitting in the sheepfold celebrating their safety from danger, only to die from starvation while inside the fold. That would be a tragedy! Christ provides safety from the dangers outside of the fold, but He also provides sustenance for those inside the fold. We aren’t just *saved*; we are *satisfied* in Him.



How would you describe the abundant life that comes through faith in Jesus?

## Point 2: Jesus is the good shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11-13).

<sup>11</sup> I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup> He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. <sup>13</sup> He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

Here, Jesus is declaring how much He loves and cares for His sheep because they belong to Him. This says less about the sheep and more about the Shepherd and His character. The hired hand loves his life more than the sheep. Jesus loves His sheep more than His own life. Like the sheep in the metaphor, it's not because we're a glamorous bunch. We who belong to Jesus haven't earned His love and protection. Jesus loves, protects, and cares for us because we're His.



How should the fact that believers belong to the Shepherd affect the way we think, feel, and live?

In contrast to the hired hand, Jesus made this noble claim: He was willing to die for His sheep because they're His and He loves them. We love statements that boldly declare the extent to which someone would go to protect a loved one. But of course, these were more than mere words with Jesus—He followed through on His claim for our salvation. A good shepherd doesn't lay down his life simply as an example for his sheep. He sacrifices his life to ensure the safety of his sheep. Jesus—the Good Shepherd—didn't just give us an example of what we ought to do; He actually saved us.

**Christ as Propitiation:** Because of God's righteousness and \_\_\_\_\_, humanity's sins must be atoned for in order for people to be \_\_\_\_\_ to God. As the propitiation for sins, Christ's death is the appeasement or satisfaction of God's \_\_\_\_\_ against sin. Christ's propitiation for our sins demonstrates both God's great \_\_\_\_\_ toward sinners as well as the necessary payment that results from the penalty of sins.

### Point 3: Jesus is the good shepherd who knows His sheep (John 10:14-18).

<sup>14</sup> I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, <sup>15</sup> just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup> And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. <sup>17</sup> For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. <sup>18</sup> No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

Jesus said that He knew His sheep and His sheep knew Him. Surprisingly, Jesus likened His relationship with His sheep to the way He knows the Father and the Father knows Him. The Father and the Son, along with the Holy Spirit, know each other intimately because they are one (John 1:1). So close is this relationship that seeing the Son is seeing the Father (John 14:9-10). It is this deep, intimate knowing that Jesus related to the way He knows us and we know Him.

Jesus’ statement that He had other sheep, alluding to Samaritans and Gentiles, who weren’t part of this sheep pen might have confused the Jews within earshot. Didn’t the Jewish people alone have Abraham as their father through Isaac and Jacob (John 8:39)? But “all the families of the earth” had been part of God’s plan ever since He called Abraham, and before (Gen. 12:1-3). Jesus commissioned and empowered His disciples to ensure that the gospel of His death and resurrection would spread throughout the world (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8).

**People of God:** Comprised of both Jew and Gentile, the \_\_\_\_\_ is created by God through the atoning \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ. As the people of God, the church seeks to live under God’s \_\_\_\_\_ care while we are protected and cared for by Him.



How does a diverse church display the glorious wisdom of God?



#### Voices from Church History

“Now if we want to be faithful Christians, then we must act like dear sheep who recognize the shepherd’s voice and listen to it alone; they do not recognize other voices, nor do they listen to them.”<sup>1</sup>

—Martin Luther (1483-1546)

# My Mission

Because Jesus laid down His life for us so that we might be saved, we live sacrificially as we point others to the sacrifice Christ made for us.

- **What step of faith do you hear Jesus calling you to take?**
- **What are some ways your group can encourage your group leader(s) and pastor(s) in their shepherding role as they reflect the Good Shepherd?**
- **Who are some wayward sheep in your sphere of influence who need to hear the good news about the Good Shepherd? Pray for opportunities to share the gospel with them.**



## Voices from Church History

“We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”<sup>2</sup>

—C. S. Lewis (1898-1963)

## Notes

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# Daily Study

## Day 1: Read John 10:1-6

Jesus painted a picture of two voices calling out to sheep: one is the good shepherd and the other is a sheep thief, and they are both calling the sheep to follow them. The sheep respond to and follow the voice of the shepherd but run away from the stranger's voice, and a good thing too since the thief wants to lead the sheep away to fleece them for personal gain.

Do you ever doubt if you really belong to the Good Shepherd—to Jesus? Sin, shame, and doubt can call out to you to convince you that maybe you don't really belong to Jesus. But Jesus assures us that all who are His sheep recognize His voice and follow His voice. They may not graze in a straight path behind the Shepherd, but they always return. Does the voice of Jesus through Scripture stir you to belief and repentance? If so, take heart because it means you belong to Him. If not, consider whose voice you are following and turn to the Good Shepherd who welcomes into His flock all who believe in Him.

### Voices from the Church

“Abundant life is not about having stuff. It's about having peace, having joy, having God. So thank you, Jesus, for being a door for us. We believe you are the only door to eternal safety. The only door to soul-satisfying pastures. The only door to God.”<sup>3</sup>

—John Piper



What are you hearing from the voice of Jesus today?

## Day 2: Read John 10:7-10

We often take doors for granted. What if there were no doors in the world? You wouldn't be able to enter or leave your home. You wouldn't be able to hop in a vehicle to go someplace, which you also wouldn't be able to enter. From another perspective, no doors would mean no sense of safety and security. A doorframe with no door invites anyone to enter, including thieves and murderers. We need doors. Without them, we are stuck and in danger.

Jesus said He alone is the gate, or door, to salvation and eternal life with God. Without this gate, there is no hope of being rescued from our sin and its consequence, no way of entering into God's holy presence. Furthermore, without this gate, there would be no protection from those whose only goal is to do us harm, notably spiritual harm. But we do have this gate, and those who believe in Jesus—the gate for the sheep—ought to be grateful.



What are some ways you will express your gratitude for Jesus as the gate to salvation?

## Day 3: Read John 10:11-13

In this passage, Jesus expanded upon His metaphor of a shepherd at the beginning of the chapter, and He did so, in part, by way of contrast. Previously, Jesus described the bad actors in the scenario as “strangers” and as “thieves and robbers” who climbed the walls of the sheepfold instead of entering by the gate (vv. 1-5). Here He layers on “hired hand” and “wolf.” The enemies of the sheep come from without and within, unknown and known. They may be among us, but they are not of us (1 John 2:18-19). They are characterized by selfishness, deception, and a desire to hurt and sow discord.

By contrast, the Good Shepherd lays His life down for His sheep. He won't abandon them but will defend them with His life. His sheep know Him intimately, and where enemies seek to harm and scatter, Jesus binds up and heals. He cares about His sheep; He cares about you.



How does the Good Shepherd's care for His sheep address the pain and struggles you are currently facing?

## Day 4: Read John 10:14-18

The Bible says it is appointed for human beings to die once and then face judgment for their thoughts, words, and actions in life (Heb. 9:27). All of us are going to die. The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23); we've earned this. And once we have died, we are going to stay dead (until, of course, Jesus returns and brings the promised resurrection). No amount of effort from our dead selves will start our hearts beating, our lungs breathing, or our bodies moving.

But Jesus, as fully human as we are, is unique, for He is also fully divine. By the command of His Father, the Son of God came to earth as a human being for the purpose of laying down His life to save us from eternal death and the judgment of hell for our sin. And He also has the right and the power to take His life up again in His resurrection, because He died not for His own sin but for ours. He died and was raised so we too might be raised in the newness of eternal life.



What are some ways you will show your love and honor for the One who laid His life down and took it up again to save you?

## Day 5: Read John 10:19-21

The people in this passage came to a crossroads as they debated over who Jesus is. They were split over whether Jesus was demon-possessed or divinely powerful. In his book *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis famously said that when you encounter Jesus, you have one of three conclusions to make: Jesus is either a liar, a lunatic, or He is Lord.<sup>4</sup> If He is a madman or a liar, then you don't take seriously anything He says. But if He actually is who He says He is, then you must take everything He says seriously. Lewis's point was that you cannot encounter Jesus and remain ambivalent toward Him—Jesus demands a response from you, and failing to respond is in itself a response to discount Jesus.

The blind man whom Jesus had healed made his choice: Jesus is Lord. To make this response means we must submit ourselves to Him and His authority. He is the Good Shepherd, after all.



What parts of your life require your repentance and submission to the Good Shepherd?



# Encourage One Another

*Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.*

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- Jesus is the gate that leads to abundant life (John 10:7-10).
- Jesus is the good shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11-13).
- Jesus is the good shepherd who knows His sheep (John 10:14-18).



How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?



In what ways is it fitting for us to see ourselves as sheep?



What does the shepherd-sheep metaphor that Jesus uses suggest about the importance of our meeting together?

## Notes

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## *The Gospel Project®*

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## Brian Dembowczyk

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Jesus was born to die—a jarring statement indeed, but one that is quite true.

Christmas and Easter are fused together, linked hand-in-hand in such a way that each is dependent on the other for its meaning. The theology of such a statement is solid but incomplete, for Jesus was not born to die immediately but rather some thirty years later. Jesus' life, then, was not utilitarian—existing just so it could be taken away and picked up again—it had greater meaning and purpose. What Jesus did during those thirty years of walking the earth mattered; He lived a life of perfect obedience to the Father. He satisfied the demands of righteousness that we could not so He might take away our sin when we trust in Him and so His righteousness might be credited to us, making us fully pleasing to the Father (2 Cor. 5:21).

In this volume we delve deeper into the marvelous truth of the incarnation to see still further glimpses of Christ's glory on earth. His righteousness did not occur in a vacuum but rather among people, ordinary people like you and me. In each unit of this volume, we will look at Jesus' interactions with people as through a prism, making slight turns to see different yet equally brilliant perspectives of Jesus' works. In Unit 22, we will see Jesus' power to heal coupled with His deep compassion for people, even those who were marginalized in society. In Unit 23, we will see Jesus' riveting teachings empowered by His divine authority. And finally, in Unit 24, we will see Jesus' miraculous power over nature, revealing His identity as Creator God.

Each ray of light we will see points to the same truth: that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God given for our salvation. Jesus was indeed born to die, but He lived so that we too might live.

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2. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, "The Salt of the Earth," November 30, 2019, [www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/salt.html](http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/salt.html).
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2. J. C. Ryle, "What It Costs to Be a True Christian," December 4, 2019, [www.the-highway.com/cost\\_Ryle.html](http://www.the-highway.com/cost_Ryle.html).

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