

Joh 10:7 NASB So Jesus said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep."

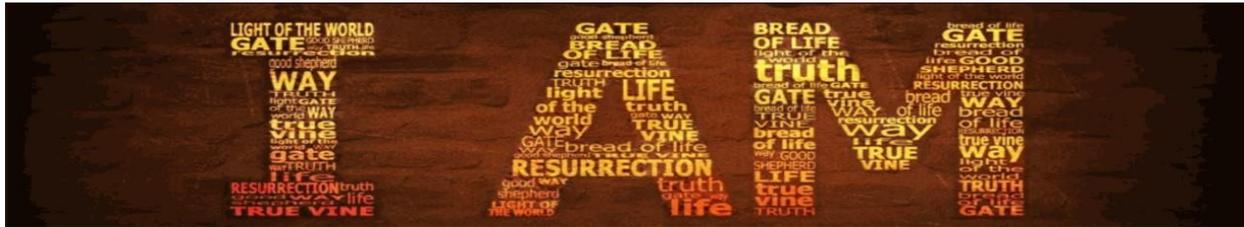
The Security of the Sheepfold

We are the sheep of His pasture. Let's examine for a minute what the sheepfold and the shepherd in the gate means to the sheep. The sheep graze all day in the pastures. If the sheep don't wander off, then the shepherd is always close by. There is safety, even in the wide open spaces as long as there is daylight. However, when night falls, danger lurks. Predators come out to hunt at night. In the cover of darkness they would be able to creep close to snatch away any sleeping lamb that was too near the outskirts of the flock. But in the sheepfold there was safety. The walls all around topped with the briars and thorns prevented predators from entering the fold silently and stealthily to kill and carry away. But then there was the gate. That is the way that danger would enter the fold. If it was to come, the gate is the way that death would enter. So the shepherd would lie in the gate to sleep. Nothing could get to his sheep without coming through him. In the darkness of the night, far away from any lights of the city, whenever a strange noise would awaken one of the sheep, it would undoubtedly raise its head and look toward the gate. Fear would pass away as it observed that the shepherd was still in the gate. Nothing dangerous had passed that way. The sheep could lay its head back down and return to restful sleep.

What is it that brings you comfort when danger comes? I know that when I wake up in the middle of the night out of a deep sleep thinking that I heard a noise in the house, I usually immediately think about the alarm system in our house. I think that the alarm would have gone off if someone had entered the house. But what about other dangers? What about when illness comes? What about when tragedy strikes? What about when financial pressures come? Can you think about a time when you were confronted with a fearful situation?

What, if anything, brought you comfort during that time? Were you able to arrest your fear through faith in the care and security of knowing Jesus? Be honest.

If your answer to the last question was yes, what specifically did you believe that Jesus would do? Did you believe in your heart that He would remove the danger, or was your confidence rather that no matter what would come, you were in His hands and He would get you through? Explain.



If you had to honestly answer no to the question, what do you think is preventing you from having that level of confidence in Jesus' care as the door of the sheepgate?

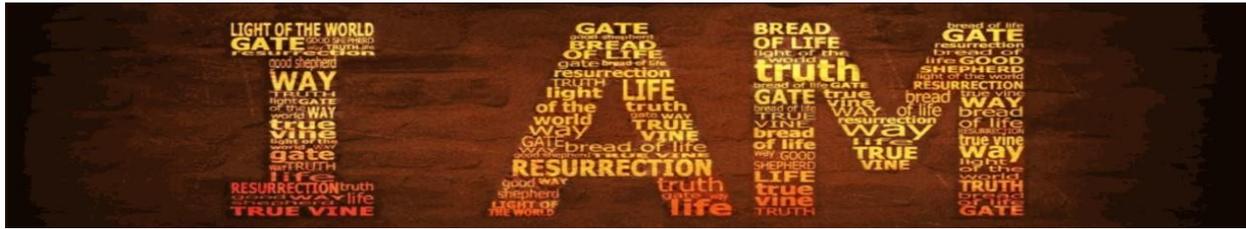
Having the kind of trust that allows you to put yourself in someone else's hands is difficult to have as a leap of faith. That kind of trust comes through familiarity. People typically lean on someone else at first in a tentative way. They entrust themselves in limited measure until they have seen on more than one occasion that the one they are trusting is faithful, that they can depend on them.

Learning Jesus' voice

Jesus said in John 10:3-4 that His sheep know His voice and as a result they follow Him. What do you think it means in a practical sense to know Jesus' voice and do you feel that you know His voice? If your honest answer is that you do not know His voice enough to trust Him when times are difficult, what do you think is needed to get you to that point?

We learn someone's voice by hearing their words. While we can't follow Jesus listening to His every word literally in the way the disciples did, we can read and meditate on the words of our Lord that have been left to us in the gospels. If we are to follow the rabbi Jesus and attempt to become more like Him, we must place the gospels in a special place in our daily reading. I once read that a modern day rabbi once said that if Christians were really interested in being disciples of Jesus, they would read all four of the gospels four times a year ... every year. While I don't believe there is any formula to reading the gospels, I do think that we should either always be including one of the gospels in our daily reading of the word or alternate between types of books (New Testament, Old Testament, wisdom literature, gospels) with a gospel account coming up in the rotation more frequently than others. And we should not be in any race to blow through a gospel book quickly. Doing that will only lead to a common error, "I've read that story a million times. I know what it says." Rather we should savor the words of our Lord, continually asking ourselves

1. What is Jesus saying?
2. How is Jesus reacting to the person He is talking to, and what kind of person is it (religious, lost sheep, pagan, outcast, etc)



Joh 8:44 NASB "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

In this passage Jesus calls the devil a murderer from the beginning. I don't remember Satan ever murdering anyone in the scriptures. To what is Jesus referring do you think?

Read Gen 3:1-5

Jesus called Satan a liar. Was he lying in this passage? Now wait a minute. Eve ate of the fruit and in the day that she did that she did not die. So wasn't Satan telling the truth? Explain

You see man was created in the image of God. God breathed of His own spirit into man to create him differently than all the animals. Man had perfect fellowship with God as he was created. When God told Adam and Eve that in the day they ate of the fruit from the forbidden tree they would surely die, He was referring to their intimate communion with Him. That communion was broken because of sin and the best part of them, the eternal part of them, died. Paul refers to us as being dead in sin before we come to know Jesus, but alive after knowing Him.

Read Romans 8:5-10

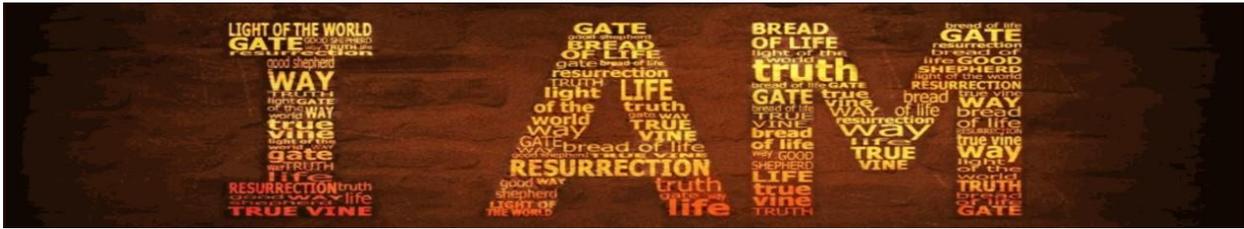
So the abundant life that Jesus has promised in John 10:10 comes about because our spirits are alive in Him.

How do we realize or perhaps maximize this abundant life do you think?

We become more and more alive in Christ as we cultivate and nurture our spiritual lives. Without doing this, we are little different than those that live lives without Christ. But as we increase the spiritual aspects of our being, we become more and more multi-dimensional. We experience abundant life on more than just the physical plain.

List 3 things that you will purpose to do this week to nurture your spirit in Christ

1. _____



2. _____

3. _____