

MARCH 24, 2024

1.4

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

Jesus gave His life for us.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will know the Good Shepherd's voice and follow Him alone.

SERIES 1: JOHN

THE GOOD SHEPHERD



FOCUS VERSE: John 10:11

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

LESSON TEXT: John 10:7-18



Lesson Title: The Good Shepherd

Icebreaker: If you could have had any job in the Bible, what would you have done?

- I. JESUS TAUGHT ON THE ROLE OF THE SHEPHERD
 - A. False versus True Shepherds
 - B. I Will Know the Shepherd's Voice
 - » *What does it mean to know God's voice? How do we know His voice?*
 - » *Recall a time when your thoughts and feelings aligned with God's Word. What about a time they did not?*
- II. JESUS REVEALED HIMSELF AS THE GOOD SHEPHERD
 - A. Lays Down His Life for the Sheep
 - B. Knows the Sheep
 - » *How do you feel knowing God knows all about you and loves you anyway?*
 - C. Speaks to the Sheep
 - » *In addition to your daily Bible reading, what is your favorite way of taking in more of God's Word?*
 - D. I Will Follow the Shepherd Alone
 - » *What other voices and influences will you need to reject or stop following to truly follow Jesus?*

Prayer Focus

- To hear and follow the good shepherd's voice
- To silence other voices and influences trying to lead us astray

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: John 10:7-18

The statements “I am the door” and “I am the good shepherd” are two of seven “I AM” (Greek: *egō eimi*) statements of Jesus seen throughout John’s Gospel. These statements directly link Jesus to Jehovah’s declaration to Moses in Exodus 3:14: “I AM THAT I AM.” This self-identification by Christ as the Creator God from the Hebrew Scriptures angered many of the Jewish religious elite who interpreted His declarations as blasphemy.

In this passage, Jesus identified Himself as both the shepherd and the sheepgate. At the same time He is the only passageway to safety and the One who guides us and protects us as we journey. This analogy is especially powerful when considering the role of shepherds and sheepgates in Jesus’ day.

The safety and well-being of the sheep were ultimately the shepherd’s responsibility and depended on the flock’s ability to recognize the shepherd’s voice. Consistent relationship between sheep and a shepherd was vital so the sheep could recognize the voice of their guide. Hired hands could come and go. Seasons and conditions could change. The one consistency for the sheep was the shepherd’s voice. Good shepherds spent countless days and hours with their sheep, studying their condition and planning for their future. Perhaps this brings additional meaning to Jesus’ statement in John 10:11 that “the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” Not only would a good shepherd die for his flock, but a good shepherd would also give up the rest of his life, with all of its conveniences and comforts, for the sake of the sheep he loved.

When the sheep were in a location where they could be brought to pasture and water daily, then after feeding in the fields and drinking by the riverbanks, the sheep were returned to the safety of the sheepfold. Sheepfolds came in all shapes and sizes, mostly dependent on the needs of the shepherd. Many ancient sheepfolds consisted of stone walls, and almost all had a single entrance—the sheepgate. The single entrance served as another measure of safety for the sheep. The singular gate made it more difficult for thieves and predators to enter the pen and wreak havoc or steal away sheep en masse.

The revelation of hearing the voice of the Good Shepherd cannot be separated from the revelation of knowing Jesus as the door. He is the only way to salvation, and He is constantly calling out to us, leading us closer to Him. We access the door by hearing and being led by His voice. That is how the ancient sheep were led, and that is how we will be led. Our daily prayer should be to daily recognize the Shepherd’s voice, and then daily walk through the open door through which He calls us.

THE STATEMENTS “I AM THE DOOR” AND
“I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD” ARE TWO OF
SEVEN “I AM” STATEMENTS.

DAY 1

John 10:7-9

⁷ Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.

⁸ All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.

⁹ I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

Biblical Insight

Jesus presents Himself as the “door” (ESV, KJV, NASB) or “gate” (Mounce, NET, NIV). Therefore, He is the only authorized passageway for salvation. Thieves and robbers can be easily identified because they do not enter in by way of the singular sheepgate. In addition, their voice is strange, so the sheep do not recognize it. Interestingly, Jesus notes that all who trust in Him will be able to go “in and out.” Going “in” the sheepfold represented finding security; going “out” of the sheepfold represented finding sustenance in the pasture. As the Door, Jesus is the only passageway to both safety and provision.

Daily Devotion

There were two kinds of sheepfolds during the time of Christ. One was a more public sheepfold in a central location that housed multiple flocks. The other was a circle of rocks in more pleasing, countryside pastures. This type of sheepfold often did not have a gate because it was makeshift in nature. There was a simple opening for the sheep to enter and exit through.

During the night the shepherd laid down across this opening, literally becoming the gate. When Jesus said, “I am the door,” He meant it quite literally. Just like no sheep (or any other animal, including predators) would make it in or out of the fold without going through the gate, none of us make it in or out of eternity without going through Jesus Christ. He is, quite literally, the only way.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 2

John 10:10-11

¹⁰ The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

¹¹ I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

Biblical Insight

Jesus' condemnation of thieves in this passage is reminiscent of Ezekiel's similar condemnation of selfish shepherds who stole from, killed, and neglected their sheep (Ezekiel 34:1-10). Jesus demonstrated He was the exact opposite of those thieves, being a life-giver rather than a life-taker. Jesus' status as life-giver has multiple meanings. First, Jesus gives abundant life to the sheep. Second, while the thieves took life from the sheep, Jesus was willing to lay down His life for His sheep. This revelation of Christ was ultimately fulfilled when He died on the cross for the sins of humanity so we might have abundant and eternal life.

Daily Devotion

A band of burglars stole seven computers from an office in San Bernadino, California. Hours later, the computers were back where they came from when the thieves realized they were property of a non-profit crisis center.

They wrote (in less than perfect grammar), "We had no idea what we were taking. Here your stuff back we hope that you guys can continue to make a difference in peoples lives. God Bless."

Thieves typically don't give, but this time, they gave back. Jesus contrasted Himself as the Good Shepherd against the thieves who stole from the flock or abandoned the flock in danger. Jesus proved His promise true when He laid down His own life for us because Jesus was, is, and will always be the Good Shepherd.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 3

John 10:12-13

¹² But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

¹³ The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

Biblical Insight

Hireling can also be translated “hired hand” (ESV, NET, NIV). Employees of a shepherd would be less concerned for the sheep and more concerned about self-preservation, but ancient shepherds had invested their entire livelihoods in their sheep. The reference to scattered sheep reminds the modern reader of Jesus’ compassion on the crowds who followed Him, seeing they were “weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd” (Matthew 9:36, NKJV).

Daily Devotion

Every creative knows what it is like to help someone with a project. Maybe you have been asked to edit something someone else has written. Hopefully, the task is taken seriously, and you turn full attention to making sure the text is the absolute best it can be. It is different, however, when you are interacting with material of your own. Words carry more weight, the process is given more attention, and you are more concerned with how the work is received. It is not just something you assisted with or participated in; you made it yourself and your level of investment is much more intense.

Hired hands may be attentive to sheep, but they don’t have as much “skin in the game.” It is different when you are a shepherd and the sheep belong to you. Jesus invested everything into redeeming us. While others may come and go, Jesus will be forever faithful.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 4

John 10:14-16

¹⁴ I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

¹⁵ As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

¹⁶ And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

Biblical Insight

The relationship between sheep and a shepherd must be mutual. It is not enough for the Good Shepherd to know His sheep; we as His sheep must also know Him. Jesus' reference to sheep "not of this fold" foreshadowed the Gentiles who would ultimately become part of His fold in addition to the Jews. (See Acts 10.) The reference to "one fold" and "one shepherd" possibly served as inspiration for Paul's encouragement that the church exists as one body under one Lord (Ephesians 4:4-6).

Daily Devotion

Have you ever been to an awkward wedding? Maybe the couple hadn't known each other long, or perhaps you knew of not-so-secret family drama attached to the ceremony. Weddings can get uncomfortable if there are underlying problems in the relationship.

Now imagine if a couple did not have to exchange vows in the ceremony. What would it be like if the wedding was simply a time for a minister to announce, "By the way, these two are now married. Okay, let's have some cake." No vows, no promises, no commitment. If marriage was a one-way street with no commitment, weddings would be shorter, but marriages would be tougher.

Interestingly, one way Jesus relates to us is through the metaphor of bride and bridegroom. Each wedding must have both. And the minister invests time to ask the bride and bridegroom to make their vows to God and to each other because a solid, lasting relationship is built on commitment.

It's wonderful that Jesus knows us as His sheep, but it's even more wonderful to realize we can know Jesus as our Shepherd. He has promised to care for us, and He invites us to trust Him. Today, spend some time talking with your Shepherd, and then spend some time listening to His voice. He wants to hear from us, and we have the holy invitation to hear from Him.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 5

John 10:17-18

¹⁷ Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

¹⁸ No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

Biblical Insight

It was necessary that Jesus' sacrifice be voluntary and not of compulsion. In the Old Testament, the sheep and bulls were led to altars of sacrifice by no choice of their own. Undoubtedly self-preservation instincts kicked in for many sheep and goats who did not want to be sacrificed. In contrast, Jesus provided an ultimate and singular sacrifice "once for all when he offered up himself" (Hebrews 7:27; 10:1-18). He was a perfect, willing sacrifice. Now He calls us as His followers to follow His example and sacrifice ourselves voluntarily. (See Romans 12:1.)

Daily Devotion

Were you aware there is a difference between kidnapping and false imprisonment? Kidnapping is legally defined as taking someone somewhere without their consent, whereas false imprisonment is defined as keeping someone somewhere without their consent. Both situations involve forcing someone into something against their will.

Our Savior was not kidnapped or falsely imprisoned. When He was arrested just before His death and held for His trial, He—unlike any other man in that same position—possessed the ability to walk away at any moment. He could have changed His entire destiny, but thank God He chose to change ours by willingly submitting Himself to death on the cross. He became a sacrifice by sacrificing Himself, a choice we benefit from every day and will benefit from for all eternity. Take some time today to thank Him for Calvary.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*
