

### **The sheep know the shepherd's VOICE**

Using a first-century example of shepherding, Jesus likens humans to sheep that aren't designed to live without supervision. Sheep are unable to naturally defend and help themselves, so they group together, frightened by anyone unfamiliar. Sheep rely on their shepherd for protection, comfort, and guidance. *Spiritually, all humans are sheep that need a Shepherd* (Is. 53:6). Unlike shepherds in the west that drive sheep from the side or behind using sheepdogs, most shepherds in the east lead from the front guiding with their voice. From birth, sheep learn to trust and love the shepherd who cares for them. When believers are born again, they begin a life of leaning into and trusting their Shepherd's leadership (John 3:3). *Believers recognize and respond to the voice of their Shepherd!*

### **Jesus is the GATE for the sheep**

As sheep are not athletic, they can't leap over high walls, scale vertical rock faces or jump through windows, they will only enter a pen by a door or gate. And, if there is no physical gate, the shepherd will become the gate and sleep there overnight. This allows him to protect those He has a personal investment in and keep out goats and wolves who don't belong. *The sheep know the Shepherd and the Shepherd protects his sheep* (Acts 28:28-30)! Additionally, when the sheep enter the gate at the end of the day, extraordinary shepherds will call their sheep by name as they pass under his hand. In this way, he will know if any are hurt or missing and need to go look for them. *The Shepherd never gives up on his sheep!*

### **Jesus is the GOOD shepherd**

Unlike hired men who run when trouble comes, the shepherd, who *owns* the sheep, gives his life to protect them. Just as the sheep cannot comprehend the sacrifice of the shepherd, Jesus will give his life by dying on the cross for an uncomprehending humanity. *The good Shepherd gives good to his sheep* (Ps. 23:1-6)! As there have been multiple attempts to kill him, Jesus claims no one can take his life, but he will 'lay it down' when he decides to. Not only will he decide when to die, but also how long he will stay dead! His power as God to 're-life' himself shows his death will be on purpose with a purpose. *The sheep can trust the power of their Shepherd!*