Breaking the Cycle of Following the Wrong Voices (IV)

The Shepherd and the Wolf

Main Scripture: John 10:10–16

Key Thought

Every spiritual voice must be judged by its character, its fruit, and its response when the sheep are threatened. The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep. The hired hand abandons them, and the wolf seeks to destroy them.

Big Idea

We break the cycle of following the wrong voices when we recognize the heart of the Good Shepherd, trust His sacrificial care, and remain united under His leadership.

1. The Good Shepherd Gives Abundant Life

The thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy. Jesus comes to give life in its fullness.

Jesus is not only the door through which we enter salvation. He is also the One who provides everything salvation promises. Through Christ, we receive the life of God and discover what life was always intended to be.

When we look at Jesus, we see life as God designed it:

- Love instead of selfishness
- Joy instead of despair
- Peace instead of turmoil
- Patience instead of frustration
- Kindness instead of cruelty
- Faithfulness instead of inconsistency
- Self-control instead of bondage

The abundant life is not necessarily a life without difficulty. It is a life made complete through fellowship with Christ.

Supporting Scriptures: John 5:26; John 6:27; John 17:23; John 1:4–5; 1 John 1:2; John 3:36; John 5:24; John 6:47; Galatians 5:22–23

Reflection

- Am I measuring abundant life by possessions or by the character of Christ?
- What evidence of Christ's life can others see developing in me?
- Is there an area of my life that still feels empty because I have not surrendered it to Jesus?

2. The Good Shepherd Sacrifices for His Sheep

Jesus did not merely talk about loving His sheep. He demonstrated His love by laying down His life for them.

His death was voluntary, intentional, and substitutionary. He died on account of the sheep, in place of the sheep, and as the sacrifice for the sheep.

The cross reveals the difference between true spiritual leadership and self-serving leadership. Jesus does not use the sheep to preserve Himself. He gives Himself to save the sheep.

Supporting Scriptures: John 10:11, 15; John 19:30; Zechariah 13:7; Hebrews 2:9

Reflection

- How does the sacrifice of Jesus shape my understanding of love?
- Does my service require anything from me, or only benefit me?
- Am I willing to accept inconvenience for the spiritual well-being of others?

3. The Hired Hand Runs When the Wolf Comes

The hired hand serves only while the arrangement benefits him. Because the sheep do not belong to him, he has no lasting investment in their survival.

When danger approaches, the hired hand protects himself. The Good Shepherd protects the sheep.

The wolf represents anyone or anything seeking to devour, manipulate, scatter, or destroy God's people. Scripture specifically warns that false teachers can arise and take advantage of the flock.

Supporting Scripture: Acts 20:29

Warning Signs of a Wrong Voice

A wrong voice may:

- Take more than it gives
- Use people to build its own reputation
- Place traditions above people
- Manipulate through fear, guilt, or control
- Scatter rather than strengthen the flock
- Abandon people when ministry becomes difficult
- Minimize the cross and the saving work of Jesus
- Prey upon people instead of praying for them

Reflection

- Does the voice I am following point me toward Jesus or toward itself?
- Does its influence produce freedom, maturity, and unity?
- Does it protect vulnerable people or exploit them?
- Does it remain faithful when serving becomes costly?

4. The Good Shepherd Has Compassion

When Jesus saw the crowds, He did not look at them as interruptions or problems. He saw people who were weary, burdened, scattered, and without proper spiritual care.

His compassion combined love, pity, concern, and deep emotional involvement. His heart was moved because people who should have been cared for had been burdened by religion and scattered by poor leadership.

The Good Shepherd does not add unnecessary weight to weary people. He leads them toward rest, truth, healing, and freedom.

Supporting Scripture: Matthew 9:36

Reflection

- When I see hurting people, do I feel compassion or irritation?
- Have religious expectations caused me to overlook someone's real needs?
- How can I reflect the Shepherd's heart to someone who feels scattered or burdened?

5. The Good Shepherd Knows His Sheep Personally

Jesus knows His sheep by name. His care is never distant, generic, or impersonal.

He knew Simon and gave him a new name. He called Zacchaeus by name before Zacchaeus ever climbed down from the tree. When He spoke Mary's name in the garden, she immediately recognized her Shepherd.

Jesus also understands our individual personalities and needs. Peter was impulsive, Thomas was hesitant, Andrew brought people to Jesus, and Judas used people for his own purposes. Jesus knew each man completely and dealt with each one personally.

Supporting Scriptures: John 1:42; Luke 19:5; John 20:16; Proverbs 27:23

Reflection

- Do I believe Jesus knows me personally, or do I relate to Him from a distance?
- What part of my nature does Jesus want to shape?
- Am I willing to care for people according to their needs instead of expecting everyone to be the same?

6. The Good Shepherd Meets the Needs of His Flock

Psalm 23 describes the daily care of the Shepherd. He provides, leads, restores, guides, protects, comforts, prepares, anoints, and keeps His sheep.

When Psalm 23:1 and Psalm 23:6 are connected, we receive a powerful promise:

"I shall not want…all the days of my life."

As the sheep follow their Shepherd, they learn through experience that He can be trusted.

Supporting Scriptures: Psalm 23:1–6; John 13:1

Reflection

- In what area do I need to trust the Shepherd's provision?
- Am I following His direction or asking Him to follow mine?
- How has God demonstrated His faithful care in my life?

7. The Good Shepherd Creates One Flock

Jesus declared that there would be one flock under one Shepherd. His salvation would reach beyond one ethnic, cultural, or religious group to include believing Jews, Gentiles, and Samaritans.

Our unity is not based on having identical backgrounds, personalities, preferences, or traditions. We are one because we belong to the same Shepherd.

Unity breaks the cycle of wrong hearing. When we remain under the Shepherd's care and connected to His flock, we are less vulnerable to voices that isolate, divide, and deceive.

Supporting Scriptures: John 10:16; Hebrews 2:9; Ephesians 2:13–17

Reflection

- Do my preferences prevent me from fellowshipping with believers from different backgrounds?
- Is the voice I am following producing unity or division?
- Am I truly connected to the flock, or am I only physically present?
- How can I help strengthen the unity of the church?

The Four Voices in John 10

Voice	Motivation	Response to the Sheep	Result
The Thief	Personal gain	Steals, kills, and destroys	Loss and destruction
The Hired Hand	Payment and convenience	Runs when danger comes	Abandonment
The Wolf	Appetite and domination	Attacks, scatters, and devours	Fear and division
The Good Shepherd	Sacrificial love	Knows, protects, leads, and dies for the sheep	Abundant life

Practical Application

This week:

1. **Examine the voices** influencing your spiritual decisions.
2. **Test their fruit** against the character and teaching of Jesus.
3. **Reject voices** that manipulate, exploit, isolate, or divide.
4. **Spend time in Scripture** so the Shepherd's voice becomes familiar.
5. **Remain connected** to a healthy community of believers.
6. **Demonstrate the Shepherd's heart** by caring sacrificially for someone else.

Group Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between simply living and experiencing the abundant life Jesus gives?
2. How can we distinguish between a good shepherd and a hired hand?
3. What are some modern examples of wolves attacking or scattering God's people?
4. Why are isolated sheep more vulnerable to wrong voices?
5. How does knowing that Jesus calls us by name affect our relationship with Him?
6. What responsibilities do pastors and ministry leaders have toward the people they serve?
7. How does Christian unity protect the church from deception?
8. What voice do you need to stop following so you can hear Jesus more clearly?

Prayer Focus

Good Shepherd, thank You for knowing us, loving us, and laying down Your life for us. Teach us to recognize Your voice and reject every voice that leads toward fear, bondage, deception, or destruction. Heal those who have been wounded by careless or self-serving leadership. Give our leaders compassionate hearts that protect and serve Your people. Unite us as one flock under Your care, and lead us into the abundant life You promised. In Jesus' name, amen.