



# Disciplers Bible Studies

JOHN  
LESSON 11

## The Good Shepherd John 10:1-42

### Introduction

A metaphor is a figure of speech which implies a likeness between two things.

The metaphor of a shepherd and his sheep is found throughout the Bible to show the relationship of God and His people. The flock of sheep always belongs to God, but at times the care of the flock is temporarily entrusted to others.

#### A. Old Testament Metaphor

In the culture of Israel, a human shepherd was known for: (1) feeding and protecting his flock of sheep (Jeremiah 31:10; Ezekiel 34:2;) (2) seeking out those that were lost (Ezekiel 34:12;) and (3) rescuing those which had been attacked (Amos 3:12.) Many of God's chosen men, including Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Jacob's sons, Moses, Joshua and David were shepherds, called and used by God to lead His nation Israel (Numbers 27:16-17.) From the idea of the shepherd as protector and leader of his flock came the concept of God as the Shepherd of Israel. David wrote, "*The Lord is my shepherd,*" in Psalm 23:1 and Asaph called God, "*O Shepherd of Israel*" in Psalm 80:1.

#### B. New Testament Metaphor

Coming to the New Testament, our Lord Jesus was the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for His sheep (John 10:2, 11, 14, 16.) He divided His sheep like a shepherd (Matthew 25:32,) and suffered for the sake of the sheep (Matthew 26:31.) The writer of Hebrews called Jesus, "*The great Shepherd of the sheep,*" and Peter called Him, "*The Shepherd and Guardian of your souls*" (1 Peter 2:25.)

#### C. Jesus' Titles

Our Lord Jesus is given more than sixty names in the Old and New Testaments, but none are more endearing or intimate than that of Shepherd. This metaphor pointed clearly and wonderfully to the fact that Jesus tended His people as an earthly shepherd watched over his flock. But, more than that, He was their Divine Guide providing comprehensive, all-sufficient care through the situations,

circumstances, trials and joys of life. The sheep who knew Jesus' voice possessed an intimate relationship with Him and lacked for nothing. He knew them by name and willingly laid down His life for them.

John 10 describes Jesus Christ as the Shepherd of His people more clearly than any other passage in Scripture. Jesus Himself was giving this discourse. In this chapter, He denounced false shepherds, explained His claim as the Good Shepherd, countered the mixed reaction of His hearers, and described the responses of the true and false sheep. People of His day should have understood His symbolic language readily because of their familiarity with shepherding as a common vocation.

### Outline of John 10:1-42

- I. Shepherd and Sheep Metaphor (10:1-18)
- II. The Discourse (10:7-18)
- III. The Response of the Jews (10:19-21)
- IV. The True Sheep (10:22-30)
- V. The False Sheep (10:31-39)
- VI. Rejection and Acceptance (10:40-42)

#### I. Sheep and Shepherd Metaphor (10:1-18)

##### A. The Setting

The setting this week is a continuation of Christ's teaching at the close of Chapter 9. It is the same group to whom He had been speaking and included His disciples, the former blind man, the skeptical Pharisees and some ever-present bystanders.

##### B. The Illustration

The words that Jesus used in His story would have been quite familiar to these listeners. Jerusalem and other towns of that day had a communal sheepfold - a large, rock-enclosed or fenced-in pen where shepherds kept their flocks of sheep at night. The doorkeeper at the entrance was responsible for the sheep while the shepherds slept elsewhere. In the morning, each shepherd came to call his own sheep out from the mixture of flocks. He called each one by name and they knew his voice. He led them out

of the sheepfold and they followed him into green pastures and still waters. The sheep knew their shepherd and followed him, but they would run away from strangers.

### C. The Symbolism

In Jesus' teaching, the sheepfold represented the nation Israel. The door was Jesus. The thief and the robber were the Jewish religious leaders of Israel. The shepherd was Jesus. The sheep were believers who followed Jesus. The doorkeeper corresponded to the Holy Spirit who was with Jesus in all that He did.

### D. Many Misunderstood

The crowd should have understood what Jesus was talking about since shepherds and sheep were so common in their culture. However, they did not grasp Jesus' analogy, perhaps because most of them considered Abraham or Moses to be their shepherd. So, He continued to try to help them understand.

## II. The Discourse (10:7-18)

### A. The Door of the Sheep

Jesus introduced another of His "I am" claims by saying, "*I am the door of the sheep.*" As such, He was the gate through which His sheep could enter and leave the protection and security of the sheepfold. He was the only passageway through which people could come into the pastures of God (14:6.) Those who entered God's kingdom through Him would be saved.

### B. Thieves and Robbers

He contrasted Himself with all other "would be" shepherds who came before Him and called them thieves and robbers. These unworthy men were the religious leaders of Jesus' day. They were malicious, exploitive imposters who came only to steal, kill, and destroy. They sought personal gain rather than the care of the sheep.

### C. Life More Abundantly

Unlike the wicked shepherds, Jesus came that people "*might have life and have it more abundantly.*" These words are very meaningful. John MacArthur explains them this way, "This (vs.10b) is the message of 1 John. If you have a proper belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God; and if you strive to understand and be obedient to the Word of God; and if you volitionally will yourself to love other Christian believers; then you will have an abundant, fulfilled

life – a life that is under girded by a deep inner peace (happiness and joy), by freedom from guilt, and by assurance of final security – eternal life."

To summarize, the sheepfold where Jesus was the door stands for God's protection and security. The pasture outside the sheepfold represents spiritual health, growth and well-being.

### D. The Shepherd

Jesus went on to say, "*I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep.*" He was God's authorized, legitimate, legal Shepherd of the flock of Israel. He came as their Messiah in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.

### E. Incongruity?

In view of some incongruity between Jesus being both the door and the shepherd, some commentators believe that Jesus was thinking of two kinds of sheepfolds: a winter sheepfold in vs. 2-3, and a summer sheepfold in vs.7,9. The winter fold was a communal pen, located in or near the village with a strong door that could be opened only by the authorized doorkeeper. The summer fold was away from the village with rough stonewalls. It had one opening for entrance and exit. At night the shepherd would lay down in the door opening to block unauthorized going out and coming in. He was both the shepherd and the door in the summer sheepfold.

### F. Hirelings

Jesus pointed out that hirelings, like unworthy shepherds, were not concerned with the sheep. They took care of the sheep for what they could get out of it. They had only minor interest in the welfare of the sheep and selfishly and cowardly ran away from wolves and other danger. Jesus, on the other hand, would lay down His life for the sheep. He was willing to sacrifice His total life so the sheep might live.

### G. Identity With the Father

He described the unique relationship between the Good Shepherd and the sheep as being like that of the Father and Himself. The Father knew Him intimately and loved Him. He obeyed His Father's will perfectly, even to the point of laying down His life. Likewise, the sheep knew their Shepherd affectionately and followed Him faithfully. Jesus knew His own by name. He associated this relationship with the one He had with the Father in the eternal order.

## H. Other Sheep Not of this Fold

Jesus told them about other sheep He had outside the fold of Israel (meaning Gentiles.) All of His sheep would be in one flock under one Shepherd. There would be no distinction according to race, sex, color or position. All would believe and follow Him as the Good Shepherd.

### I. The Father's Love

Next, He said that the Father loves the Son because of His total dedication to do the Father's will. He would willingly give His life for His sheep. He knew what His earthly mission was and that He was in control of everything. He must first go through torture, shame and crucifixion and then, having defeated Satan, sin and death, He could impart resurrection life to others.

#### Application:

Of all the events of Christ's earthly ministry the most significant are His death and resurrection. The authenticity and validity of the Christian faith rest on these two pivotal historic events. Do you think often about the suffering and pain that Jesus endured on the cross for you? Reflect on His resurrection power, along with the Apostle Paul's words in Ephesians 1:15-21, *"(I pray that) the eyes of your understanding (will be) enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe."*

### III. The Response of the Jews (10:19-21)

Jesus' discourse brought a mixed reaction. The Jews were divided as to whether to be for Him or against Him. Some said He was crazy and had a demon. Others implied that a man with a demon could not make a blind man see. Throughout history, the response has been similar. Many people have said Jesus was either a fraudulent, imaginative liar, or a persuasive, unbalanced human being. Others have said He was the Son of God and the Savior of the world. Every person confronted with the Gospel has to make the decision to either accept Him or reject Him.

### IV. The True Sheep (10:22-30)

#### A. Change of Scene

The scene changes between vs. 21 and 22. The previous setting was right after the Feast of the Tabernacles in October. Now Jesus was at the Feast of

Dedication in December. This feast celebrated the taking back of the Temple from the Syrians who defiled it for several years before Jesus was born.

#### B. Are You the Christ?

In Solomon's porch in the Temple, the Jews asked Jesus to tell them plainly if He was the Messiah. He answered that He had told them, but they did not believe. He added that, since you do not believe My words, believe My works that I do in My Father's name. Jesus was reminding them of the healing of the crippled man, the restoring of the blind man's sight and the teaching discourses in the Temple. All that he did in the Father's name was clear and sufficient evidence that He was the Messiah. These works declared the character as well as the power of God to those who were not totally insensitive.

#### C. True Sheep and Eternal Life

In addition to His works and words, His life demonstrated that He was from God. The true sheep heard His voice and they instinctively recognized and followed Him. More than that He said, *"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand."* Physical life comes to an end. But those who are united by faith in God – those who belong to the flock of the Good Shepherd – will never lose real life because Jesus keeps them secure. He told them further that the Father who is greater than all will not let anyone snatch them out of His hand.

#### D. Eternal Security

The Biblical meaning of eternal security is this: If you genuinely know the Good Shepherd's voice and you believe in Him and have truly received Him as your Lord and Savior, then you cannot lose your salvation. You may experience some dark periods and backslide, but your spirit will not perish. J. Vernon McGee puts it this way, "The sheep may get into the pigpen, but there has never been a sheep that stayed in the pigpen. Sheep and pigs do not live together. The sheep is always a sheep." No man, no created thing can pluck the true sheep out of the Savior's hand (Romans 8:28).

#### E. Trinitarian Words

In vs. 30 Jesus said, *"I and My Father are one."* What a powerful statement! He was and is an obedient Son of His Father, one in spirit, one in mind, one in unity and one in action with Him. The Jews had asked Jesus for a straight-forward statement about His Messiahship. He told them more than that. He was in complete spiritual and functional

unity with His Father, and carried out the Father's will fully at all times.

### **V. The False Sheep (10:31-39)**

#### **A. The Frenzied Jews**

The Jews understood Jesus' claim to be equal with the Father as deity. But these intolerable words put them in a frenzy and they prepared to stone Him for blasphemy. He not only broke the Sabbath with the crippled man and blind man, but His words making Himself equal to God were more than their raging minds could stand.

Jesus stalled them with a question about which of His works they wanted to stone Him. His works were a part of a divine mission, done according to His Father's direction. More than that, His works were in perfect harmony with His words.

#### **B. Blinded Eyes – Hardened Hearts**

But the well-educated, self-serving Jews could not correlate Jesus' works with His words. As a human being, He was presenting Himself as God. They failed to see with their blinded eyes and hardened hearts that Jesus was not making Himself to be the Father God. But His works and words were showing Him to be what He truly was – the Son sent by the Father to bring light and life to mankind.

#### **C. The Word “gods”**

He reminded them that in Psalm 82, the preeminent God rose in the divine council to pronounce judgment on beings called “gods.” These were human judges that administered justice unfairly. The point was that God Himself called them “gods,” so why was it a capital offense for the sent one of God to call Himself the Son of God.

#### **D. False Sheep Know Not God**

Although He described Himself many ways and many times as the divine, second Person of the Trinity, this is the only place in the Gospel of John that Jesus said, *“I am the Son of God.”* He had acknowledged that words were not enough, but when considered thoughtfully with His divine works, including miracles, they proved His claims. The unbelieving, antagonistic Jewish leaders still wanted to kill Him for blasphemy, and they tried to grab Him. But again the power of God protected Him because it was not yet time for His passion. Jesus escaped.

### **V. Rejection and Acceptance (10:40-42)**

The Apostle John presented Jesus' departure as symbolic of the Jewish rulers unofficial rejection of Christ. They refused to accept His claim as the Messiah, Son of God. So, He withdrew His gracious offer of salvation and left Jerusalem. He would not return until Palm Sunday, about 3-4 months later. He went away beyond the Jordan River to Bethany where John the Baptist had born witness of Him before Jesus started His public ministry. The people there remembered Him and listened to Him. As they recalled the things that John had said of Him, they were moved to acknowledge the truth of John's testimony. Many believed in Him there.