

The Good Shepherd

February 13, 2021

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

John 10:1-18

Session Outline

1. The Sheep Hear His Voice (John 10:1-5)
2. The Shepherd is the Gate (John 10:6-10)
3. The Shepherd Lays Down His Life (John 10:11-18)

Theological Theme

Only Christ was an able and adequate mediator because He was fully God and fully man. The incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God was appointed by the Father from the foundation of the world.



Leader Guide

The Good Shepherd

Introduction

- ❓ When you were a child did you ever get separated from your parents in a crowded area?
- ❓ What did you do to find them? What did they do to find you?

Many parents have experienced the momentary terror of turning around to find that their child has wandered away. This is especially frightening when it happens in a crowded place like a department store, amusement park, or sporting event. In situations like these, it is common for both parties to be frightened. The parent is already mentally running through scenarios. The child is simply afraid because they are alone.

It's common for the parent in that situation to begin to yell their child's name, without any regard to what others might think. They have one goal and one goal only. The parent may certainly use their eyes to look around, but they know that if they can just make their child hear their voice, then the child will come. So, they use their voice and call out to their child by name. They will call the child's name louder and louder because their voice can reach places that their eyes can't see. And, when a lost and frightened child hears the voice of their parent, they will be guided back to them.

The voice of the Good Shepherd is speaking and calling out to His children constantly through the Scriptures. Jesus said His sheep hear His voice and will follow Him. This continues to be true today. Those whom the Father is drawing to the Son hear His voice and believe. Those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb love and cherish God's Word and have attentive ears to the words of their Shepherd. They read it, savor it, obey it, and share it.


Session Summary

Christians rejoice in the fact that in the valley of the shadow of death, they have a Good Shepherd who watches over them. Jesus has promised to be with His sheep until the end of the age. Our Good Shepherd's rod

and staff bring the sheep comfort and protection (Psalm 23:4). What is the rod and staff of Christ? It is the gospel. His people are comforted and protected by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Christians are comforted by the staff of the gospel amid all manner of trials when they consider God's kindness and mercy toward them in Christ. The staff of the gospel keeps them from veering over the cliff of fear, worry, or anxiety. Similarly, they are protected by the rod of the gospel because with it the accuser of the sheep is driven from the courtroom. That old record of wrongs is shredded. The debt has been paid. The death warrant has been fulfilled. And now, Jesus, their Shepherd and Savior, is interceding for them before the Father.


1. The Sheep Hear His Voice (John 10:1-5)

 What action of Jesus was described in verse 3? How does this take place? What do His sheep do in response?

Jesus said He calls His sheep by name and He leads them out. What a beautiful and reassuring picture of what Christ is to His people. He is a Good Shepherd who knows His sheep intimately and cares for them. God promised that He would do this before Christ through the prophet Ezekiel. The Lord said,

"I myself will search for my flock and look for them. As a shepherd looks for his sheep on the day he is among his scattered flock, so I will look for my flock. I will rescue them from all the places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and total darkness. I will bring them out from the peoples, gather them from the countries, and bring them to their own soil. I will shepherd them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the land. I will tend them in good pasture, and their grazing place will be on Israel's lofty mountains. There they will lie down in a good grazing place; they will feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I will tend my flock and let them lie down. This is the declaration of the Lord God."—Ezekiel 34:11-15

Jesus said His sheep follow Him because they know His voice. He also says they will never follow a stranger but will run away from Him because they don't know the voice of strangers. We should note the certainty of Christ's claims here. The clear implication is that those who know his voice will certainly follow it. There is no doubt about what they will do when they hear it. Similarly, He asserted that they will never follow a stranger.

 How could Jesus be so certain that those who entered the sheepfold by Him would indeed remain sheep?

The Watchman, the Shepherd, and the Thief

Verse 1 speaks of the thief invading the sheep pen, not the sheep. The "watchman," if we identify one specifically, may refer to John the Baptist, or perhaps even the Holy Spirit. Obviously, the shepherd is the Lord Himself, and the thief and robber probably refers to the Pharisees.

Jesus was able to make this claim with certainty because He guaranteed their position and preservation. A little later in John 10 Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one” (vv. 27-30). Paul confirmed this truth when he wrote to the church at Philippi saying, “I am sure of this, that he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6). This “good work” is the work of divine grace in the soul. It is not something Christians accomplish, rather it is the work of God. Thus, their justifier is also their sanctifier. Their rescuer is also their preserver. The work of salvation is God’s work, from start to finish.

In John Bunyan’s allegory, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, we find a parable that helpfully illustrates this doctrine. Just after Christian, the pilgrim, entered by the wicket-gate, he was led by a man named Interpreter into a place where there was a fire burning in a fireplace. As Christian looked, he saw a man standing next to the fire and he was casting much water upon it to quench it; yet did the fire burn higher and hotter. “What means this?” asked Christian. The Interpreter answered, “The fire is the work of grace that is wrought in the heart of man. He that casts water upon it to extinguish it is the Devil. But, as you can see, despite this, the fire burns higher and hotter. Now, you shall see the reason for that.” So, the Interpreter took Christian around to the backside of the wall where he saw another man who had a vessel in his hand. The vessel was filled with oil and the man continually cast oil secretly into the fire. “What means this?” asked Christian. The Interpreter answered, “This is Christ, who continually, with the oil of his grace, maintains the work already begun in the heart.”¹

It is a glorious truth proven in Scripture that the work of salvation is God’s work. He carries it out according to the pleasure of His own will. This is seen easily enough in regeneration (how could a dead man believe?) and also in justification (how could a sinner declare themselves innocent?). But when it comes to sanctification and preservation, Christians are prone to wander, believing God has done His part and now they must do theirs. One of the subtle, joy-crushing deceptions that Christians all too readily believe is that they must live as Christians in their own strength. But this is deadly false. A man can no more sanctify himself than he can justify himself. Do not be deceived, for He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion.

This is the lesson of the fire burning in the wall. The reason the work of grace that is being wrought in your heart continues to grow higher and

hotter is that Christ is casting oil on it. He Himself maintains that work. If the good work of salvation was truly begun in you, then Christ will certainly bring it to completion. Here's a simple, yet profound, truth that we must remember: Christians are kept by Christ. As the old hymn says, "though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us, we will not fear, for God has willed his truth to triumph through us."²

- Application: If you are a Christian, how have you experienced the reality that God is the One who sustains your faithfulness through the years?

2. The Shepherd is the Gate (John 10:6-10)

- What did Jesus say about entering the sheepfold? How may someone enter in?

Jesus said, "I am the gate. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture" (v. 9). In other words, Jesus claimed to be the only way to eternal life. He claimed to be the key to passing from death to life and becoming a child of God. This wasn't the only time He made such claims. A few chapters later, He said plainly, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (14:6). Furthermore, the Apostle John began his Gospel by saying, "But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born, not of natural descent, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13).

- How is the exclusivity of Christ for salvation supported in other parts of the New Testament as well?


Recall what Paul told the Galatian churches: "not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are troubling you and want to distort the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:7). In other words, there is no other gospel, no other mediator, no other gate. The essence of the gospel is Christ's righteousness alone, His shed blood alone, for the payment for our sins and salvation of souls. Any other "gospel" message is a distortion and corruption. It is no gospel message at all. Any aberration to that true gospel message converts it from a message that leads to life to a message that ends in death.

The gospel is exclusive. It is clearly defined. The gospel message isn't malleable to fit the times. It doesn't need our softening. It doesn't need our re-branding. It only needs our proclaiming. There is a message that is the biblical gospel and then there are counterfeits.

In Galatia, Judaizers had slipped in and were preaching a false works-based gospel. The works-based gospel says Jesus's sacrifice is only partially


effective: One must complete Christ's work to attain full salvation. A person must have faith in Jesus plus keep the Law. These laws can be any number of things such as be baptized, go through membership class, stop sinning, attend Sunday School, go on a mission trip, tithe, read the Bible, fast, and so on. These, of course, are good things. And the soul that is truly saved will bear fruit. But when a person looks upon their fruit as how they are saved, then the fruit turns putrid, rancid, and maggot infested.

When you believe and come to Christ, you must leave behind your own righteousness and good works and bring nothing but your sin. You must abandon your own goodness, acts of service, godliness, Christian duties, and humility, and bring nothing but your desperate need and wretchedness. Otherwise, Christ is not fit for you, and you cannot be fit for Christ. Christ will be a complete Savior to you or no Savior at all. You must be an undone sinner, or Christ and you will never agree.


 Application: If the gospel of Jesus Christ is the only way a person can be saved, then what should be our priority in ministry outside of the church?

3. The Shepherd Lays Down His Life (John 10:11-18)

In Jesus's description of Himself as the Good Shepherd in John 10, He said that He lays down His life for the sheep. To get the message across, He repeated this four times in the passage (vv. 11, 15, 17, 18).

 What did Jesus mean when He said this? How has He fulfilled this promise?


Though His listeners may not have understood Him to be literal at the time He was speaking, Jesus's mission was to literally lay down His life for the flock of God. He did this because the wages of sin is death and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin (see Romans 3:23; Hebrews 9:22). There was a need of death for man to be forgiven, so Jesus Christ took on flesh and died.

 What did Jesus's death accomplish? How has this impacted your life?

God was both the just and the justifier because of Christ's perfect active obedience throughout His life and His passive obedience as He was hung on a cross (Romans 3:26). Christians can approach the one true and living God in worship only through Christ's work on their behalf. The sin of Christians is imputed to Christ. Christ's righteousness is imputed to Christians (2 Corinthians 5:21). The word "imputation" is an accounting term; it means "to apply to one's account." In theological




terms, we speak of a double imputation that takes place in justification. The sin of Christians was applied to Jesus's account at the cross, and Jesus's righteousness is applied to the account of Christians.

Jesus's work as the Good Shepherd on the cross gives Christians secure hope because this hope was gained through Christ's work alone. Had we done something to attain it, then surely we could do something to lose it. And there is no doubt that if a person could lose their salvation, they would. Jesus was the hope of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And He was Paul and Timothy's hope. The Good Shepherd is the hope of all Christians. He is the hope of the nations. The Good Shepherd secured salvation for all who look to Him through His death on the cross.

-  Application: How does reflecting on your own sinfulness before God lead you to worship Jesus, the Good Shepherd?

Conclusion

Look to Christ your Good Shepherd and remember the gospel, Christ's staff. Turn your eyes away from yourself, the world, the lies of the enemy, your temptations, and contemplate the glorious gospel. Make it a daily practice to warm yourself often by the fire of the gospel. Return to it unceasingly.

-  What does it mean that Christians are "kept" by the Good Shepherd? If you are a Christian, how have you been kept in this way?
-  How should this shared act of rescue lead the church to live together in unity?
-  How does the world respond to the assertion that Jesus Christ is the only way to God? Why? Why are we still called to share the truth?

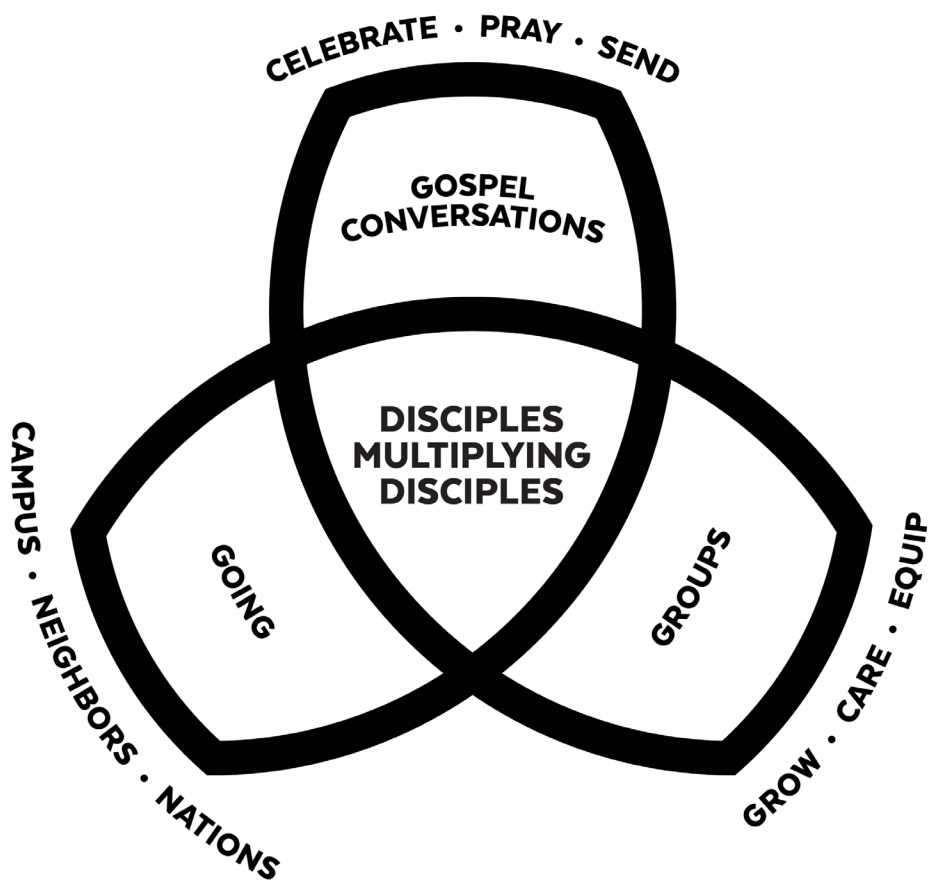
Prayer of Response

Ask God to help you trust in the Good Shepherd to be both your justifier and sanctifier. Pray for clarity concerning the truths found in Scripture about your salvation. Ask the Lord to increase your love for and faith in the Good Shepherd. Also, ask the Lord to keep you humble and repentant, knowing that if it were not for the grace of God in Jesus Christ, you would be lost.

Additional Resources

- *The Gospel According to John* by D.A. Carson
- *John* by Colin G. Kruse
- *John 1-12 for You* by Josh Moody

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



DxD This Week

Group Emphasis

Have someone share about their baptism experience. Have someone else share about a friend or relative's baptism they attended.

For Next Week

Session Title

- Nicodemus

Main Passages

- John 3:1-18

Memorize

¹⁴ *"I am the good shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me,*

¹⁵ *just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father. I lay down my life for the sheep.*

- John 10:14-15

Historical Context of John

Purpose

The purpose statement in 20:30–31 indicates that John wrote with an evangelistic purpose, probably seeking to reach unbelievers through Christian readers of his Gospel. If the date of composition was after AD 70, the time of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, it is likely that John sought to present Jesus as the new temple and center of worship for God’s people in replacement of the old sanctuary.

Author

A close reading of the Gospel of John suggests that the author was an apostle (1:14; cp. 2:11; 19:35); one of the Twelve (“the disciple Jesus loved,” 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:20; cp. 21:24–25); and, still more specifically, John, the son of Zebedee (note the association of “the disciple Jesus loved” with Peter in 13:23–24; 18:15–16; 20:2–9; 21; and in Lk 22:8; Ac 1:13; 3–4; 8:14–25; Gl 2:9). The church fathers, too, attested to this identification (e.g., Irenaeus). Since the apostolic office was foundational in the history of the church (Ac 2:42; Eph 2:20), the apostolic authorship of John’s Gospel invests it with special authority as firsthand eyewitness (Jn 15:27; 1Jn 1:1–4).

Setting

The most plausible date of writing is the period between AD 70 (the date of the destruction of the temple) and 100 (the end of John’s lifetime), with a date in the 80s most likely. A date after 70 is suggested by the references to the Sea of Tiberias in 6:1 and 21:1 (a name widely used for the Sea of Galilee only toward the end of the first century); Thomas’s confession of Jesus as “my Lord and my God” in 20:28 (possibly a statement against emperor worship in the time of Domitian); the reference to Peter’s martyrdom, which occurred in 65 or 66 (21:19); the lack of reference to the Sadducees, who ceased to be a Jewish religious party after 70; and the comparative ease with which John equated Jesus with God (1:1, 14, 18; 10:30; 20:28).

Special Features

The Gospel of John is different from the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—in that more than ninety percent of its material is unique. John’s Gospel does not focus on the miracles, parables, and public speeches that are so prominent in the other accounts. Instead, the Gospel of John emphasizes the identity of Jesus as the Son of God and how we, as believers, should respond to his teachings.

Extended Commentary

John 10:1-18

10:1–42 In this discourse, Jesus criticized the Jewish leaders for failing to give Israel proper spiritual guidance. By contrast, Jesus is the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep. Chapter 10 provides a commentary on the previous chapter that revealed the Jewish leadership's legal pettiness, rigidity, and hardness toward God. Not only is Jesus the good shepherd, he is also the door through which believers find abundant, eternal life (vv. 9–10). The following interchange, culminating in another attempt to stone Jesus for blasphemy, took place at the Festival of Dedication (vv. 22–39). It is followed by a final reference to John the Baptist, which closes out the “festival cycle” of chaps. 5–10 and the entire section (1:19–10:42), which began with the ministry of John the Baptist and his witness to Jesus.

10:1 The sheep pen may have been a courtyard (18:15) near a house surrounded by a stone wall where several families kept their sheep. The gate would have been guarded by a hired gatekeeper (10:3). Thief may focus on the covert nature of entrance to the pen, and robber on violence (Lk 10:30, 36).

10:2 The shepherd was the authorized caretaker of the flock.

10:3–4 On gatekeeper, see note at v. 1. The reference to the shepherd calling his own sheep by name and leading them out may allude to passages such as Nm 27:16–18 (esp. v. 17), possibly a messianic passage, or Ezk 34:13. Israel's exodus from Egypt is sometimes portrayed as a flock following its shepherd (Ps 77:20; Is 63:11, 14; cp. Ps 78:52). Old Testament prophetic literature envisioned a similar end-time deliverance for God's people (Mc 2:12–13).

10:5–6 The strangers in the figure of speech are the Jewish leaders.

10:7, 9 Jesus's reference to himself as the gate may hark back to messianic readings of passages such as Ps 118:20.

10:8 All who came before me may hint at messianic pretenders who promised their followers freedom but led them into armed conflict and doom instead (Ac 5:36–37; 21:38). The reference to thieves and robbers is reminiscent of the reference to Israel's shepherds “who have been feeding themselves” but not the flock (Ezk 34:2–4; see note at Jn 10:1).

10:9 Jesus is the gate to salvation (cp. 14:6). The NT elsewhere speaks of “entering” God's kingdom as through a door (see Mt 7:7, 13; 25:10; Ac 14:22). Will come in and go out echoes covenant terminology, especially blessings for obedience (Dt 28:6; cp. Ps 121:8). It is also reminiscent of Moses's description of Joshua, who led Israel into the promised land (Nm 27:16–17). Find pasture depicts the assurance of God's provision (1Ch 4:40; Ps 23:2; Is 49:9–10; Ezk 34:12–15).

10:10 Jesus's promise of abundant life in the here and now brings to mind OT prophetic passages such as Ezk 34:12–15, 25–31.

10:11 Jesus is the good shepherd. In the OT, God as the true shepherd is contrasted with unfaithful shepherds whom God will judge (Jr 23:1–4; Ezk 34; Zch 11:4–17). David (or the Davidic Messiah) was also depicted as a good shepherd (2Sm 5:2; Ps 78:70–72; Ezk 37:24; Mc 5:4), as was Moses (Is 63:11; cp. Ps 77:20). The reference to the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep calls to mind young David (1Sm 17:34–37).

10:12–13 The hired hand does not care for the sheep and abandons them in times of danger. The hired hands of Israel (Ezk 22:27) are contrasted with God and his Messiah, whose role is patterned after God’s “good shepherd” par excellence, King David (1Sm 17:34–36).

10:14 On Jesus as the good shepherd, see note at v. 11.

10:15 “Whoever knows Jesus also knows the Father, and the Father loves those who love Jesus and believe in him” (Herman Ridderbos).

10:16 The other sheep . . . not from this sheep pen refers to Gentiles (Is 56:8). Jesus envisioned a future Gentile mission following his death on the cross. One flock, one shepherd alludes to Ezk 34:23; 37:24. Believing Jews and Gentiles will be united into one messianic community.

10:17 Jesus did not gain the Father’s approval by sacrificing his life. Instead, his sacrifice was in obedience to the Father.

10:18 Received this command is covenantal language, relating Jesus’s relationship with the Father to the OT depiction of God’s relationship with Israel. These words also remind readers that Jesus’s death was not the result of events that got out of hand. This was the reason he came (see 12:27).³

References

1. John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress: From This World to That Which Is to Come* (Philadelphia, PA: Uriah Hunt, 1829).
2. Martin Luther, “A Mighty Fortress is Our God”
3. *CSB Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).

Author Bio

John Bunyan (Book We Referenced / Additional Resources)

John Bunyan (1628-1688) was a Puritan preacher and writer in England. Bunyan had very little schooling. He followed his father in the tinker's trade, and served in the parliamentary army from 1644 to 1647. In 1655, Bunyan became a deacon and began preaching. He experienced marked success from the start and was the pastor of the Bedford church. Bunyan is the author of *The Pilgrim's Progress* which he wrote in 1676 while imprisoned for preaching without a license. His numerous other titles include *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* and *Holy War*.

Martin Luther (Book We Referenced / Additional Resources)

Martin Luther (1483-1546) was a German monk, priest, professor, theologian, and church reformer, whose teachings inspired the Reformation and deeply influenced the doctrines and culture of the Lutheran and Protestant traditions.

D.A. Carson (Book We Referenced / Additional Resources)

D. A. Carson (PhD, University of Cambridge) is research professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, and is the author or editor of more than fifty books, including *The God Who Is There* and *How Long, O Lord?* He is one of the founders of The Gospel Coalition and an active guest lecturer in academic and church settings around the world.

Colin G. Kruse (Book We Referenced / Additional Resources)

Colin G. Kruse (PhD, Fuller Theological Seminary) is senior lecturer of New Testament at Melbourne School of Theology. In the twenty years following his ordination into the Anglican ministry, Kruse gained practical experience in parishes in Australia and the U.S. along with five years of missionary service as a theological lecturer in Indonesia. Besides journal articles on the New Testament, Old Testament and the Dead Sea Scrolls, Kruse has authored several books including *Paul, the Law and Justification* and *New Testament Models for Ministry: Jesus and Paul*. He has also written the Tyndale New Testament Commentary on 2 Corinthians and the Pillar New Testament Commentary titles *The Letters of John* and *Paul's Letter to the Romans*.

Josh Moody (Book We Referenced / Additional Resources)

Josh Moody (Ph.D., University of Cambridge) is the senior pastor of College Church in Wheaton. He is a pastor, author, conference speaker, and college campus speaker. He is the president and founder of God Centered Life Ministries. His books include *7 Days to Change Your Life* (Abingdon Press 2017), *How Church Can Change Your Life* (Christian Focus 2015), *Preaching to the Affections* (Christian Focus 2014), *Journey to Joy* (Crossway 2013), *Jonathan Edwards and Justification* (Crossway 2012), *No Other Gospel* (Crossway 2011), and *The God-Centered Life* (Regent 2007; IVP UK 2006).