

“The Truest Leader”

1 John 10; 1-5

Series : Love Came Down: 6 Servant

Nathaniel Brodish

The Woodside Church

January 4, 2026

Good morning, church family. I want to welcome everyone here today—and especially those who are here for the first time. We say this often, but we really believe it: you belong before you believe. You’re family the moment you walk through those doors. We’ve been spending these weeks looking at who Jesus really is—not just what He teaches, but how He leads. We’ve seen Him as Prophet, Priest, King, Savior. Today, Jesus gives Himself a title that might feel quieter—but is actually deeply personal.

He calls Himself the Shepherd. What’s interesting is that Jesus never compares us to powerful animals... or independent ones... or impressive ones. He calls us sheep. And at first, that can feel uncomfortable—until you realize this: sheep don’t survive by strength or sight. They survive by listening. How many of you in here have struggled with that before? I have to! And that tells us something important about the kind of leader Jesus is. Because most of us want leaders who give us answers, plans, and certainty. But Scripture shows us a different kind of leader— one who walks ahead of us when we can’t see, and asks us to trust His voice one step at a time. So if you have a Bible—or you can follow along on the screen—turn with me to John chapter 10. And as we read, I want you to keep one question in mind: whose voice has been guiding your steps lately? But before we get started I’m going to ask everyone to stand up and give a fist bump to 3 people around them. Stay standing, and let me pray.

Exported from Logos Bible Study, 9:42 AM January 4, 2026. 3 John 10:1–5 NIV 1 “Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. 2 The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” V1: Right away we can see that Jesus is warning us. He’s telling us to watch out. But for what? Jesus here is saying that when we allow other things in our life to lead us we end up giving it things we were never intended to. Jesus is warning us about traps—voices and desires that promise life but slowly lead us into harm.

We give those things permission to have authority in our lives when they weren’t designed to. THESE are the traps of our lives — the things that entice us, bring us in, the things our soul hungers for. V2: This verse directly clarifies v1. Jesus here is clarifying for us the posture of the Shepherd. The sheep don’t vote on who leads them. Authority doesn’t come from the flock—it

comes from the shepherd. V3: The authority of the shepherd here is pouring off the pages. Here it talks about the gatekeeper. In the context of the passage these are individuals that have been anointed by the Spirit. These are those that God has chosen to lead his sheep. This verse really points to 3 key aspects of the Shepherd sheep relationship. It points out (1) the sheep listen to the shepherds voice, (2) the shepherd knows them by name, and (3) The shepherd leads them out.

From here we can understand: 1. the sheep know the shepherds voice and he guides them. 2. The sheep listen to the shepherds voice not their own What happens though when the sheep listen to their own voice? What happens when we listen to our own voice? What happens when we give in to temptation? Maybe those 2025 goals are starting to slip through your fingers here at the end of the year, it's okay I have more sweets than I promised myself, or one more cookie isn't hurting anyone. Or when we Exported from Logos Bible Study, 9:42 AM January 4, 2026. 4 listen to the advice we shouldn't have taken or took a look at that one website. Or maybe being a little too friendly to that new co-worker. These are all traps in our lives. The things that we can get trapped in. Sheep often find themselves separating from the flock to go after things they want.

They get distracted and this can often lead them to empty fields where no other sheep are. But the Shepherd never loses track of the sheep in his flock. When a sheep gets distracted and no longer hears the voice of the shepherd continues grazing not realizing they are lost. The shepherd however notices. The shepherd will leave the flock to find the one that's lost. But what does he do when he finds them? does he punish them? No. He picks it up, puts it over his shoulders and carries it home. This sheep is not tossed around and punished for getting lost but the shepherd carries this sheep with care until it is safe with the others. V4: Verse 4 here really points out the intentionality of the care for the sheep the shepherd has. We can see that the Shepherd knows the way and all the sheep have to do is follow. The is a strong leader. They follow without hesitation because they understand and hear the shepherds voice. V5: When we follow the voice of the shepherd and know it in and out we know when it's not his voice. When money counters are taught to find a counterfeit within the pile we would think they would expose them to them first so they know what they are looking for. So they know what they look like, feel like and could spot them out. We would think they look at what's fake first. On the contrary, money counters are never given a counterfeit during training. This is purposeful so that they understand the feel, smell, look of the real thing. Just like the sheep.

They know the face of the shepherd, the voice, they understand all that makes up who the shepherd is. So just like the money counters when a fake comes along it is thrown out when a stranger comes along the sheep will run away because they do not recognize the voice. The problem isn't that we don't hear voices—it's that we haven't spent enough time with the Shepherd to know which one is His. Some of you are asking God to remove the traps when He's asking you to listen to His voice Exported from Logos Bible Study, 9:42 AM January 4, 2026. 5

The truest leader is the shepherd—if we are the sheep Jesus is our shepherd. Jesus is the truest leader. Jesus warned us about traps in John 10—and I've experienced firsthand how dangerous it is to walk forward when you can't see. ENDING STORY: (Holds up mouse trap) how many of you know what this is? How many of you have used one before? When I was in high school I

worked at a summer camp called Twin Pines. Every year we would do a week of staff training to get us prepped and ready to go for the summer full of sunburn, screaming kids, and wet socks.

Raise your hand if you've ever been there! Can I get an amen! One of those staff training days was on team building. That in order to have a successful summer we had to work as a team. We had to bond with one another and create a community. We had some of our training in their gym but this one afternoon as we gathered our stuff to meet outside the main lodge we were told training was on the the volleyball court. When we show up there is a mysterious bucket on the floor next to our director and a box of blind folds on the table. Our director then explained that everyone needed to grab 4 mouse traps and set them up in the middle of the volleyball court. As were now standing around the mouse traps he asks us to partner up and take off our shoes. He then handed a blindfold to each pair and asked each of us to stand across from one another (one on each side of the mouse traps). The one holding the blindfold would put it on and then their partner would instruct them through the mouse traps to their side. remember we don't have shoes on.

Before he said go he announced that 3 teams would be going at the same time trying to get across while listening for the instructions of their partner. I instructed my partner to my side no problem but to make things fair each individual had to go so it was my turn. I put on that blindfold and before I heard the word go our director announced that we could only use up, down, left and right to direct our partners. It took some time but I made it across. The thing that stands out to me being the hardest was the ability or lack there of listening for my partners voice while 3 people are also yelling and instructing.

This story reminds me of how we as sheep follow Christ our Shepherd. Jesus our shepherd always sees what we as his sheep cannot. He guides us and keeps us safe. But were there times when I was blindfolded that I wondered if I could make a better choice? Yes. But did I know that my partner knew better? Yes.

The voice of our shepherd matters more than our voice. We need to trust the shepherds voice. The hardest part of walking blindfolded wasn't the traps—it was choosing which voice to trust. "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil—for you are with me." Faith isn't just knowing where the traps are—it's knowing who's guiding your steps. What voice has been guiding your steps lately