

Lesson 5

Jan. 4, 2026

## **Jesus: The Good Shepherd:**

**Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, leads and provides.**

### **THE LESSON OVERVIEW**

One of the greatest portrayals of Jesus is found in John 10, where He is depicted as the Good Shepherd, showing His deep care and sacrificial love for His followers. Jesus contrasts Himself with false leaders, presenting Himself as the true shepherd who offers protection, guidance, and a rich, abundant life to His sheep. He also describes Himself as “the door” (v. 9), revealing He is the way to salvation and security for His followers. This chapter also delves into themes of divine authority, unity with the Father, and the promise of eternal life. John 10 serves as a compelling reminder of Christ’s unwavering devotion to the Father’s will and His unique relationship with His disciples.

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Shepherding held both practical and symbolic importance in first-century Judaism. As a cornerstone of Israel’s agricultural society, it required vigilance, strength, and an intimate understanding of sheep and their environment. Shepherding was rich in spiritual symbolism, with Scriptures often depicting God as a shepherd who guides and cares for His people. Likewise, King David, one of Israel’s most beloved leaders, began as a shepherd. Yet, despite its lofty imagery, shepherding was viewed as a humble trade. Still, Jesus embraced His identity as the Good Shepherd, which combined His role as the Anointed One and His relation to David.

### **THE LESSON OUTLINE**

**1. SHEEP KNOW THE SHEPHERD’S VOICE: John 10:1-10.**

- A. The Parable of the Shepherd (1-6)
- B. Jesus Is the Door (7-10)

**2. JESUS SACRIFICES HIMSELF FOR HIS SHEEP: John 10:11-21.**

- A. Jesus Is Not a Hired Hand (11-13)
- B. Authority Over Life and Death (14-21)

**3. THE SHEPHERD KNOWS HIS SHEEP: John 10:22-30.**

- A. His Word Is True (John 10:22-26)
- B. His Grasp Is Firm (John 10:27-30)

## DISCUSSING THE LESSON

### 1. SHEEP KNOW THE SHEPHERD: John 10:1-10.

#### A. The Parable of the Shepherd, John 10:1-6

Jesus presents the parable of a shepherd and the sheep to highlight the stark contrast between His ministry and that of the Pharisees. Symbolically, Jesus describes Himself as the true Shepherd who enters through “the door” (v. 2), calling and leading each of His sheep “by name” (v. 3) and leading them with care. This imagery reveals His intimate relationship with His followers, His authenticity, and His selfless guidance. In contrast, He refers to others who come in another way as thieves and robbers (v. 1). This serves as a pointed critique of the Pharisees, whose leadership often prioritized legalism, self-interest, and control over genuine care for the spiritual well-being of the people. Unlike Jesus, they lacked the personal connection and sacrificial love that define a true shepherd.

Furthermore, the sheep’s response to the shepherd’s voice illustrated the depth of trust and recognition between Jesus and His followers. The sheep flee from strangers because they do not recognize their voice, symbolizing how true believers discern and reject false teachings or hypocritical leaders. Despite their societal respect and religious authority, the Pharisees failed to embody the qualities of shepherds who genuinely love and nurture their flock. Their inability to understand Jesus’ figure of speech in this passage reveals their spiritual blindness and disconnect from God’s heart for His people. Conversely, Jesus’ approach demonstrates divine leadership rooted in love, humility, and a deep commitment to guiding His followers toward abundant life.

#### B. Jesus Is the Door, John 10:7-10

In response to the Pharisees’ confusion, Jesus expanded the metaphor. Yes, He is the Shepherd who leads and guides the sheep, but in verse 7, Jesus added, “I am the door of the sheep.” This is the third of seven “I am” statements that characterize John’s Gospel and unveil new dimensions of Jesus’ identity. In what way was Jesus “the door”? A door either allows or prevents passage through a barrier, and most are easy to operate and pass through. However, if the door is locked, some will try to gain passage through other means. A person who attempts to enter without the proper key or authority does so with impure motives. As the door, Jesus is the only legitimate means by which a person may enter into a relationship with God. The Pharisees believed their Jewish heritage and the law of Moses opened the door to God, but Jesus alone offers access to God.

Through the ages, both before and after Jesus, various people have claimed unique or divine authority. Many, like the Pharisees, perpetuated religious legalism or piety. But any program, ritual, or tradition that attempts to augment or replace Jesus as the door to the Father is improper and leads only to disappointment and destruction. In the parable, Jesus makes it known that these kinds of people and their religious ideas, which included all false leaders who came before Jesus, are “thieves and robbers” (v. 8) – a real and dreaded threat in the first century. It is not surprising that Jesus said such people (self-righteous religious leaders) would spiritually lead to theft, murder, and destruction (v. 10). What is shocking, however, is Jesus’ declaration that He alone offers safe pasture and abundant life.

In today’s world, it is often suggested that the ultimate truth can be found through any religion or personal experience, and there are countless paths to God. However, in John 10, Jesus makes a bold and clear statement to the contrary. He reveals salvation is possible only through Him. Any path that bypasses Jesus will ultimately harm the soul, leading to spiritual loss and destruction.

To experience the full and abundant life He promises, we must listen to His voice and choose to follow Him alone.

## **2. JESUS SACRIFICES HIMSELF FOR HIS SHEEP, John 10:11-21**

### **A. Jesus Is Not a Hired Hand, John 10:11-13**

In verse 11, John's Gospel introduces another powerful "I am" statement, as Jesus calls Himself "the good shepherd." This is a profound statement of His divine goodness, as revealed through His constant love, compassion, mercy, and kindness for His flock. Unlike a hired hand whose primary concern is saving his own life and who holds no genuine love for the sheep, the good shepherd typifies sacrificial care and deploys unwavering devotion. A hired worker would likely abandon the sheep when danger approaches, prioritizing personal safety. A genuine shepherd, in stark contrast, selflessly puts his life on the line to safeguard their flock. This dedication reveals a level of compassion far beyond what any mere hireling would choose to offer. This was a commentary by Jesus on the insincere religious leaders in Israel.

Interestingly, Jesus used active present language when He stated, "The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep" (v. 11 NKJV). This stressed both His intent to give His life for His sheep and the certainty of it happening. Shepherds rarely encountered such grave situations where laying down their lives was required to protect the sheep. Indeed, doing so would leave the flock unprotected. Yet Christ's words immediately point forward to His death on the cross – a mission fueled by unparalleled love. Through this supreme act of selfishness, He not only shields His flock from spiritual peril but ensures their everlasting safety. The backdrop is strikingly ironic: those who sought His death, the Jewish religious leaders, were claiming to be the "shepherds" of the Jews. However, unlike them, Jesus' death on behalf of His flock demonstrated His willing devotion to provide complete salvation.

### **B. Authority Over Life and Death, John 10:14-21.**

By reiterating, "I am the good shepherd and know My sheep" (v. 14), Jesus further clarifies that the Pharisees, like the hired hand, do not truly know the people and are out of touch with what is happening in their midst. Many throughout Israel were already beginning to worship Jesus as the "Son of Man" (see the healed man in 9:35-38). No wonder Jesus says in 10:14 that He is known by His own. Not only is Jesus the door and the Good Shepherd, but He was publicly validating the rumors among the people concerning His divinity.

In verses 16-18, Jesus elaborates on what the sheep should expect from Him. First, He proclaimed He has "other sheep ... which are not of this fold" (v. 16a), alluding to the fact that He had come not only for the Jews but also for the Gentiles. He would unite all His sheep together in "one flock" with "one shepherd" (v. 16b NKJV). Up to this point, the blessings of God and the ministry of Jesus had been primarily directed toward the people of Israel, so Jesus' declaration would have been confusing to the Jewish religious leaders. However, Jesus humbled Himself before the Father, giving Himself as a demonstration of the Father's love (3:16), thereby fulfilling His plan of redemption. Jesus' comments also point to His divine authority. In a way only God could claim, Jesus said, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again" (10:17). Jesus was foreshadowing and forewarning what was to come. He had both the right and the power to sacrifice His life and then to restore Himself to life (v. 18).

Jesus knows and cares for us so intensely that He laid His life down for us. In contrast to some in our lives who may only "love" because of how we perform or based upon what we can do,

Jesus loves us simply because of who we are. The love of Jesus is not something we should ever undervalue, and neither is it something we could ever overestimate. We should praise and thank the Lord that He has chosen us, called us His own, cares for us, and has good plans for us: “I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jeremiah 29:11 NKJV).

### **3. THE SHEPHERD KNOWS HIS SHEEP: John 10:22-30.**

#### **A. His Word Is True, John 10:22-26**

While the opening section of John 10 took place during the Festival of Tabernacles (September – October), verses 22-26 occurred in the winter, during the Festival of Dedication (November – December). Some time had passed, and Jesus was being asked, “How long do You keep us in doubt?” (v. 24 NKJV). While these particular Jews may have been contemplating Jesus’ teaching for a few weeks, it does not seem their intention was to know Jesus as Messiah. Instead, it appears they desired to trap Him into saying something they could use against Him. Jesus said, “I told you, and you do not believe” (v. 25 NKJV).

Jesus was discerning in His discussions with the Pharisees, never outright declaring that He was the Messiah. However, He repeatedly alluded to His identity, encouraging the people to discern who He was. In verse 25, for example, Jesus acknowledged the signs and wonders manifested in His ministry had been done in the Father’s name and testified to His identity. Why did these interrogators persist in their failure to recognize Him? Jesus said, “Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep” (v. 26). In other word, not only were these Jews spiritually blinded by their ambitions, but they had also become deaf to the word of the Lord.

#### **B. His Grasp Is Firm, John 10: 27-30**

Jesus described the eternal blessing bestowed on the sheep who hear His voice. While some, such as the Pharisees, had gone deaf, those who opened their ears and hearts to hear Him would be known by the Good Shepherd. As they responded to His call and followed Him to the pasture, not only would they discover an abundant life (vv. 9-10), but they also would “never perish” (v. 28). They would live forever because the Good Shepherd would soon lay down His own life for them. In the pierced and blood-stained hands of Jesus, His sheep find peace and security.

Jesus’ Jewish opponents asked Him to speak plainly (v. 24). In verse 30, He did “I and My Father are one.” Echoing the cardinal confession of Judaism that God is one, Jesus explicitly declared His unity with the Father. This statement was intended to be understood as His claim of deity. The Jewish authorities clearly understood the implication of what Jesus said and intended to stone Him for blasphemy (v. 33). This illustrated Jesus’ point that they were thieves and robbers who sought to steal, kill, and destroy (v. 10). Thankfully, those whom the Shepherd brings to the Father cannot be pulled from His hand (v. 29).

Verses 22-30 offer a warning and a promise. On the one hand, those who do not heed the Word of God will ultimately discover that they have become spiritually blind and deaf. Even worse, in their belief, God will not recognize them as His sheep. On the other hand, for those who commit themselves to the ways, words, and will of Jesus, there are blessings in this life and the life to come. When we abide in Him, nothing will ever tear us from His grasp because nothing can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39).

**CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP**

When we are dealing with sorrow or pain, the journey to recovery and calm waters can be found by following the voice of the Shepherd. He goes before us to provide restoration for our souls.

**MINISTRY IN ACTION**

Because Jesus is the door, anyone who turns to Him can receive salvation. As the Good Shepherd, all who follow His voice find care. Pray for unsaved loved ones to encounter Jesus.

## WORKSHEET

### When Jesus Healed Only One of Many Who Were Sick

**Only John's Gospel Tells** of an occasion when Jesus healed only one man who was among "a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed" waiting to be healed (5:3 NKJV). The whole story is told in John 5:1-15.

**This Story Is Usually Identified As** "The Healing of the Man at the Pool of Bethesda." This pool was located in Jerusalem near the Temple. It was surrounded by five porches in which a multitude of sick people waited for the opportunity to be divinely and miraculously healed (vv. 3-4).

**The One Man in This Crowd Jesus Chose To Heal** had been severely disabled for 38 years (v. 5). He was able to move himself from one place to another but could not move quickly enough to get into the pool first and be healed, and he had no one to help him get into the pool (vv. 6-7).

**Jesus Commanded This Man,** "Rise, take up your bed and walk" (\*v. 8 NKJV). And immediately the man was healed and obeyed Jesus (v. 9). Why did Jesus choose to heal only this one man on this occasion? We are not likely to ever fully know the answer to this question in this life. But consider the following.

**John's Gospel Identifies Jesus As "The Good Shepherd"** (10:11; and all of chapter 10). Jesus told a story about the value of one lost sheep to a good shepherd (Matthew 18:11-14).

**What We Have in Jesus' Healing of This One Man** is not an example of neglect of the many, but an example of the importance to Jesus of one solitary person.

**This Man's Extreme And Long Disability** had, in some way, been caused by sin he had committed (v. 14); and Jesus gave him forgiveness, healing and warning.

**Included In the Dispensation of Divine Healing** is that "if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (James 5:15 NKJV). The one man healed by Jesus at the pool of Bethesda was both healed and forgiven and saved by Jesus.

## **Jesus Knows His Own**

The intimacy between the shepherd and sheep is evident from the fact that He names them. This ancient practice strongly suggests the intimacy between Christ and His followers.

1. Describe the “seal” of God mentioned in 2 Timothy 2:19.
2. What does God promise His followers in Revelation 2:17?

The wolves which infested Israel’s countryside did not hunt in packs but prowled by night separately, and were the foes of the sheep and goats. The wolves caught and killed some of the flock, while the rest scattered in fright.

3. Who would you identify with the “thieves and robbers” in John 10:8, and the “thief” in verse 10?
4. What was Jesus’ most significant expression of love toward His sheep (v. 15)?
5. In verse 20, what did “many” people say about Jesus, and why?
6. What insight does verse 21 suggest on how we might respond to those who deny Jesus’ identity as God’s Son?