

REFLECTION GUIDE

JOHN 10:1-15 | THE GOOD SHEPHERD

KEY TERMS

Shepherd - In Jesus' day, shepherds did a dangerous, often despised job, caring for their sheep with intimate knowledge and constant attention. Jesus uses this imagery to highlight his personal, protective, and sacrificial care for his people.

The door - Sheepfolds in 1st century Israel had only one entrance, which was typically guarded by the shepherd at night, meaning the shepherd was literally the "door" or "gate." By calling himself *the door* (v. 9) Jesus is saying he is the only way of salvation.

Life - When Jesus speaks of *life* (v. 10), he is talking about more than physical life. *Life* here is synonymous with eternal life—meaning full, abundant, and forever life resulting from a deep relationship with God.

DID YOU KNOW?

Shepherding is seen as such a personal, intimate practice in the Middle East—both in Jesus' day and ours—that many shepherds name each sheep, often based on their physical characteristics (i.e. White-ears, Long-nose, etc.).

SYNOPSIS

In John 10, Jesus continues his discussion from chapter 9, which has become primarily with a group of Pharisees, although others are likely present. To make his point, Jesus draws on shepherding imagery that was both understandable for his audience and steeped in Old Testament allusions including Exodus 34, which describes a coming day when God will "shepherd" his people through a descendent of David. In verses 1-5, Jesus identifies the religious leaders of his day with thief's and robbers who do harm to the sheep, while he identifies himself as the true shepherd of God's people.

Jesus continues with this imagery in verses 7-15, making his third and fourth "I am" statements in John's Gospel when he says *I am the door* and *I am the good shepherd* (vv. 7, 9, 11, 14). Jesus' point is true life is found through him and him alone. He is also foreshadowing his sacrificial death when he says that he will *lay down (his) life for the sheep* (vv. 11, 15). Again in this section, Jesus emphasizes his unity with his Father, and his unity with those who look to him for salvation (v. 15).

GOING DEEPER

Read Hosea 6:6, John 17:3, and Philippians 3:7-11. Why do you think these verses emphasize "knowing" God? How is faith about knowing God personally rather than just believing facts or doing certain things? How might your relationship with God move from knowledge *about* him to an intimate, trusting relationship *with* him?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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LEARNING THE WORD

1. Read John 10:1-15. Make 3-5 quick observations. What verses most catch your attention? Why?
2. What is significant about the fact that Jesus describes us as sheep and himself as the Good Shepherd? What lessons can we learn from this image?
3. Jesus contrasts the good shepherd who cares for his sheep from others (stranger, thief, robber, hireling, etc.) who have nefarious goals. What actions separate or distinguish the good shepherd from the false shepherds?
4. In the Gospel of John, John records seven "I am" statements that Jesus makes asserting his identity as the Savior sent from God. Identify the two "I am" statements in these verses and discuss their significance.

LIVING THE WORD

5. In Jesus' day, his words here received mostly a negative reaction (see verses 19-20), and it seems likely this would also be the case in our modern world. Why do you think most people naturally resist the idea that they are like sheep in desperate need of a shepherd?
6. John 10:9-11 represent the heart of this passage and provide a summary of the Gospel, teaching *both* the hard news of the exclusivity of Jesus *and* the good news of the provision of Jesus. Have you come to embrace Jesus as *the only* door through which a person may gain real, abundant life and *the only* Good Shepherd who laid down his life for your salvation? If so, when did these truths become real for you? If not, what is keeping you from believing them?
7. If you lived with total confidence that Jesus is *your* Good Shepherd who wants to give you life and life abundant, how would this shape your attitudes, your worries, your temptations, your view of your successes / failures, your relationships, and more?
8. This week, ask God to help you walk moment-by-moment under the care of your Good Shepherd who knows *you* by name. Each day this week, practice living with a constant awareness of the safety, security, guidance, identity, and love of Jesus, your Good Shepherd.