

# The Good Shepherd

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(John 10)

## I. Introduction

- A. What animal does the Bible compare us to more than any other? Sheep!
1. You're not really complimenting someone if you compare them to a sheep
    - a. Sheep aren't attractive; you may call someone a "fox" but never a "sheep"
    - b. Sheep aren't very smart; we act like sheep when follow without thought
      - 1) Sheep aren't very good at critical thing; they just "*follow the flock*"
      - 2) They don't even do that very well—sheep are good at getting lost
    - c. Sheep aren't very athletic; to be a sheep is to be defenseless and weak
    - d. Sheep don't smell good; musk perfume isn't made to smell like a sheep
  2. Maybe we should be insulted when the Bible over-n-over calls us "sheep"
    - a. Why does God choose such an ugly, smelly and unappealing metaphor?
    - b. **Factoid:** Being a shepherd in the Bible wasn't very appealing either
      - 1) Egyptians hated shepherds; Joseph used that for cover ([Exo 46:32](#))
      - 2) Shepherds were seen in polite society as low-class, uncouth ruffians
      - 3) Shepherds were smelly and dangerous "*gypsies, tramps and thieves*"
- B. Maybe we should wonder why God allow Himself to be seen as a shepherd
1. And yet, the metaphor of God as shepherd is very common in Bible
    - a. Two of best loved psalms present God as shepherd ([23:1](#), [100:3](#)).
    - b. Jeremiah promise God will gather his people as shepherd ([Jer 31:10](#))
    - c. Jesus shows God's care for the lost in terms of a Shepherd ([Lk 15:4](#))
    - d. Peter shares God's pastoral responsibility with elders ([1 Pet 5:2, 4](#))
  2. Best known use of metaphor is Jesus as "*Good Shepherd*" ([Jn 10:1-5](#))
    - a. This comes after a debate over Jesus' healing of a blind man ([John 9](#))
      - 1) Jesus accuses the Jewish leaders of being spiritually blind ([9:40-41](#)).
      - 2) They confirm accusation by missing metaphor of shepherd ([10:6](#))
    - b. So maybe they were spiritually blind after all—and what about us?
    - c. We are familiar with "the Good Shepherd," but do we understand it?
  3. Jesus makes three main points about Himself with this figure of speech

## II. Good Shepherd: Three Main Points

A. **First**, the Good Shepherd **PROVIDES** for his sheep. ([John 10:9-10](#))

1. The main job of the shepherd was **PROVISIONS** and **PROTECTION**.
  - a. Shepherd lived with the sheep and moved them to find water & pasture
    - 1) Where were Joseph's brothers when they sold him? *With the sheep*
    - 2) Where were the shepherds when angels appeared? *With their sheep*
  - b. So the sheepfold wasn't a comfortable fenced pen in shepherd's backyard.
    - 1) It was generally a remote cave or a circle of rocks or thorn bushes
    - 2) The shepherd himself would sleep across the opening as the GATE.
2. So Jesus is the gate of the sheepfold—we come and go through him ([10:9](#))
  - a. The Pharisees were the thieves and robbers who tried to climb the wall.
  - b. Jesus is the gate of his sheep fold—image is about more than entrance
    - 1) **Protection**: Jesus gives us salvation and therefore he gives safety.
    - 2) **Provision**: It is in Jesus that we come and go to have our needs met.
  - c. Both of the images of protection and provision are important
3. The Pharisees as the shepherds of Israel saw their job as one of prohibition.
  - a. Being leaders meant they knew exactly what was NOT to be done!
    - 1) There were 365 negative commands—one for every day of the year
    - 2) They guarded each and every one; this was why they opposed Jesus!
  - b. Is it possible we still see the job of shepherds in terms of prohibition?
    - 1) **Example**: Wanted to take kids to a youth rally when youth minister
    - 2) Elders refused, "*We said yes last time!*" *Afraid they'd get out practice?*
4. By contrast, the Good Shepherd wants his sheep to both survive and thrive!
  - a. Yes, He is the gate that closes to protect us and keep us safe.
    - 1) Some things are harmful, and He protects us—largely ourselves.
    - 2) There are negative commands, but they are there for our protection.
    - 3) Jesus is no indulgent grandparent—He shepherds our well-being.
  - b. But he opens the gate to allow us to have abundant life to the full ([10:10](#))  
*"life in all its fullness"* (NLT) or *"better life than they ever dreamed of"* (MES)
  - c. To truly follow the lead of the Good Shepherd is to find incredible joy.

B. **Second**, the Good Shepherd **SACRIFICES** for His sheep (**John 10:11-13**)

1. How do you tell the Good Shepherd from just some guy with sheep?
  - a. One way is watch what happens whenever danger threatens the sheep.
  - b. Hired-hand runs and leave the sheep; shepherd risks his life for sheep
  - c. **September 11**: People ran from towers, fireman-n-police ran toward it
2. Shepherds who knew their sheep would put themselves on the line.
  - a. Remember how David fought lions and bears to protect his sheep?
  - b. While David put himself on the line, Jesus put Himself on the cross!
3. **Martin Luther**: “*The cross puts everything to the test.*” It puts us to test!
  - a. Message of cross is not a doctrine but a way of life (**1 John 3:16-18**)
  - b. Today we again participated in the memorial of the cross—Lord’s Supper
    - 1) The emphasis should be on *participated*, and not just *remembered*.
    - 2) It does more than just remind us of the past; it calls us to the future!
  - c. The cross of Christ was not one-time static event in history—*it is our life*.
    - 1) It calls us to accept God’s grace and follow the Good Shepherd daily.
    - 2) It calls us to a life self-sacrifice and surrender as we live with others.
    - 3) It calls us to give up pride, conceit, and our demand to get our way
  - d. Selfishness dies on the cross; what is reborn is a concern for Him / others
4. Good Shepherd not only calls us from the cross; he calls us to the cross.

C. **Third**, Good Shepherd **KNOWS SHEEP** and **IS KNOWN** by them (**10:14**)

1. This is why shepherds, not chicken farmers are our models of leadership.
  - a. My uncle was a chicken farmer with huge barns and thousands of birds
  - b. The only time he loved a chicken was after Aunt Betty fried one up
2. First century shepherds were different; they knew their sheep by name.
  - a. One writer tells of seeing two shepherds meeting with sheep behind.
    - 1) As they talked, the two lines of sheep mingled into one large flock.
    - 2) When it was time to leave, the two shepherds called to their sheep
    - 3) The one flock separated into two lines as sheep follow their shepherd
  - b. You’ve seen pictures of the shepherd’s staff— was basically protection.
  - c. What kept the sheep in line was the sound of the shepherd’s voice!

3. Jesus here hits at the heart of the failure of the Pharisaic shepherds.
  - a. Their consistent criticism of Jesus was, “*He eats with sinners!*” (**Lk 15:2**)
  - b. They knew themselves and their own group, and dismissed everyone else.
  - c. Good Shepherd knows all of his sheep, even when **we don’t** (John 10:16)
    - 1) Christianity is EXCLUSIVE—only those who know the Shepherd
    - 2) But it is also INCLUSIVE—ALL those who know the Shepherd
4. Good Shepherd knows His sheep, and He doesn’t consult sheep for advice!
  - a. We’ve wasted too much time drawing lines, deciding who is in and out.
    - 1) Years ago, a local church had men’s meeting to discuss true sheep
    - 2) They decided we were doing things wrong and aren’t really sheep
  - b. Jesus knows sheep; He doesn’t allow other sheep to approve His choice!
  - c. The job of sheep is to hear Shepherd, not to include/exclude other sheep!

### III. Conclusion

- A. Ultimately, what John asks in this text —“*Do you know the shepherd’s voice?*”
  1. We can know a lot of facts about the Bible, and not the shepherd’s voice.
    - a. That was the mistake of Pharisees; they knew text and missed Shepherd!
    - b. Dare we think that is a smaller problem today than it was then?
  2. Leonard Sweet tells of imprisonment of Prince of Grenada, heir to Spain
    - a. He was locked in a dungeon for 33 years with only a Bible to read
    - b. When he died, his notes were found—result of 33 years of study  
*Psalm 118:8 is middle verse of the Bible; Ezra 7:21 has all the letters but “J”*  
*Esther 8:9 is the longest verse; no word of more than 6 syllables is in Bible.*
    - c. He read Bible 100 times, but heard only trivia, not Shepherd’s voice
- B. **Old Story:** Traveling show in the old west featuring a Shakespearean actor.
  1. Performed excerpts from famous tragedies and comedies of the great Bard
    - a. From Hamlet to Othello, people were spellbound (*even if they had no idea*)
    - b. Afterward, he asked for requests; an old preacher requested Psalm 23
  2. The actor said he would do it only if the old preacher would do it as well
    - a. After actor’s recitation, people cheered; after the preacher, dead silence
    - b. The actor said quietly, “I may know the psalm; he knows the shepherd”
  3. Day will come when only question that matters, “*Do you know him too?*”