



# Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

## Examining the text & our hearts:

*Bible Reading: John 9:39 - 10:21*

### Jesus: The Gate, The Good Shepherd & His Voice

*Jesus unfolds another aspect of his ministry through a figure of speech. Jesus uses the good shepherd to differentiate his ministry from that of the false shepherds (Jewish leaders). He also lays down the means through which he will shepherd God's people, his voluntary sacrifice for them. This image has a dark background that Jesus is drawing upon.*

#### I. Jesus Continues his Conversation with some of the Religious Leaders (Jn. 9:39-41)

? "Remarkably, chp. 10 proceeds without any transition from the previous chapter. This seems to indicate that the recipients of Jesus' good shepherd discourse are the same Pharisees Jesus targeted at the end of chapter 9. If so, this helps us understand the thrust of Jesus's words in chapter 10 even better. In the preceding chapter, Jesus's healing of the blind man led to the man's excommunication... (9:34). Jesus saw in this provocative act an arrogant assertion of usurped authority that called for further comment. For the Pharisees were not only blind themselves (9:40-41); they also were "blind guides" (cf. Matt. 23:16, 24), leading astray those entrusted to their care." (A. Kostenberger, *Encountering Bible Studies: John*, p. 105)

? Jn. 9 "concludes with Jesus declaring the Pharisees who do not believe in Him to be spiritually blind & remaining in sin [9:39-41]. Jesus continues to address the Pharisees in the shepherd discourse, but he shifts the predominant imagery from sight & blindness to [shepherd/sheep]. Aside from the shift in imagery, the Gospel narrative gives no indication that Jesus' audience in Jn. 10 differs from that in 9:39-41" (William M Wright, "Patristic Biblical Hermeneutics," *Letter & Spirit*, Vol 7, (2011) p. 193)

#### A. They ask, "We aren't blind too, are we?"

? "The Pharisees...are completely unaware of their own spiritual blindness (v. 40), & their guilt remains (v. 41).

The formerly blind man, on the other hand, walks home not only with his physical sight restored but

also as a spiritually changed man—a believer & worshiper of Jesus (v. 38).” (A. Kostenberger, op cit, p. 104)

### **B. Jesus responds, “Now that you say, ‘we see,’ your sin remains.” (i.e., your unbelief remains)**

? “Sight & blindness are not defined by one’s physical sight, but one’s openness to the revelation of God in Jesus.” (Gail

O’Day, *The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary: John*, p. 562)

? “Sin is defined by neither the presence of an illness (9:2, 34) nor the violation of the law (9:16, 24) but by one’s resistance to Jesus...The Jewish authorities...repeatedly insist on their knowledge about who Jesus could & could not be & by so doing, showed themselves to be closed to Jesus...& hence blind.” (Gail O’Day, *NIBC: John*, p. 562)

? “...[T]his Johannine sign turns out to be a highly symbolic display of Jesus’ ability to cure spiritual blindness. Conversely,

as the present story makes clear, the only thing against which there is no remedy is spiritual pride that claims to see

while being in fact blind.” (A. Kostenberger, op cit, p. 105)

## **II. Jesus’ Figure of Speech (Jn. 10:1-6)**

? “This is not a narrative parable. Unlike some...parables in the Synoptic Gospels where you have a plotline, a story that is told, there is no narrative [&] no plot here. What you have instead is a kind of extended metaphorical usage of sheep farming metaphors.” (D. A. Carson, “Jesus the Shepherd of God (Part 6) John 10:1-21,” TGC)

### **A. The dark backdrop to Jesus’ words**

? “The dark backdrop of Jesus’ good shepherd discourse is...the blatant irresponsibility he perceives in the Jewish religious leadership. Sadly, the corruption characteristic of the Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day was nothing new. As Zechariah puts it, ‘Woe to the worthless shepherd, who deserts the flock! May the sword strike his arm and his right eye! May his arm be completely withered, his right eye totally blinded!’ (Zech. 11:17).” (A. Kostenberger, op cit, p. 105)

? “The images of sheep & shepherd were frequently used with metaphorical significance within the OT. Traditionally, God

is understood as the shepherd & God’s people as sheep (Psa. 23:1; 80:1; 95:7; 100:3). Of particular importance for the

background of Jesus’ use of pastoral imagery here is Ezekiel 34, in which the Kings of Israel are the bad shepherds who

endanger & exploit the flock (Eze. 34:1-10); God is the good shepherd who will rescue the sheep & who will place them in the care of ‘my servant, David’ (v. 23) – that is, a restored monarchy (Eze.

34:11-31).” (G. O’Day, *NIBC: John*, p. 568)

? “In Ezekiel 34 God condemned the religious leaders of Israel for their mistreatment of his sheep (34:1-10)...[T]he shepherds...left the sheep exposed...forced them to fend for themselves...even

killed the sheep...In response, God will set up “one shepherd” over the flock—his servant David (34:22-24). At the time of this prophecy, King David was dead &

had been for a long time. We understand this promise refers to a King who would come from the line of David. It’s a promise about the Messiah. All of this is background to help us interpret Jesus’ words

in John 10. In the previous chapter Jesus healed a blind man. When the man who had been healed would not denounce Jesus, he was kicked out of the synagogue. The religious leaders left him to

wander alone, fending for himself, but he didn’t remain alone for long. Jesus found him. Jesus fulfills Ezekiel 34...The good shepherd who cares for God’s people.” (Matt Carter & Josh Wredberg, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in John*, pp. 267-8)

**B. Two main characters (vv. 1-2)**

## 1. Thief/robber (v. 1)

? “The Pharisees of Jesus’ time were just the latest representatives of the tradition of ungodly leadership in Israel.” (A.

Kostenberger, op cit, p. 107)

? “...Jesus is positioning the Pharisees in the role of thief & stranger. Their conduct toward the blind man...demonstrated that they do not have the flock’s best interest at heart, whereas Jesus’ conduct... showed him to be

the shepherd who comes to the sheep (9:35) & to whom the sheep respond (9:36-38). It is this use of the pastoral imagery

that the Pharisees did not understand, because as teachers & leaders of Israel, they would think of themselves in

the role of shepherd, not thief or stranger.” (G. O’Day, op cit, p. 568)

## 2. Shepherd (v. 2)

**C. Two ways of entering the sheep pen (vv. 1-2)**

## 1. Climbing over the wall – illegal access

## 2. Through the gate – authorized access

**D. Two voices and two responses (vv. 3-5)**

## 1. The sheep hear the shepherd’s voice &amp; follow him

? “The intimacy of the relationship between the shepherd & the sheep is demonstrated by the sheep’s ability to recognize the shepherd’s voice (vv. 3b-4)...As a result...the sheep will follow the shepherd.” (G. O’Day, op cit, p. 567)

? The point “Jesus especially drives home in this paragraph turns...on his own personal knowledge, the knowledge the

shepherd has of the sheep. All Near-Eastern shepherds stood & called their flock apart. He goes further & calls his own sheep by name, & they hear his voice...recognize him, & they follow him. This is a wonderful thought...God knows us. Not just in the sense that he knows everybody & everything, a function of his (i.e., omniscience), but...that he owns his people as his & knows them personally as they know him, personally & experientially.” (D. A. Carson, “Jesus the Shepherd of God (Pt. 6) Jn. 10:1-21,” TGC)

## a) Each and every sheep is called by name

? “Another notable emphasis in John’s Gospel is his individualism, focused once again on Jesus. The shepherd calls

each sheep by name (John 10:3–4).” (James D. G. Dunn, Jesus According to the NT, p. )

? “The intimacy of the relationship between the shepherd & the sheep is demonstrated by the... shepherd’s ability to

call ‘his own’ by name (v. 3b).” (G. O’Day, op cit, p. 567)

? “When the shepherd comes in he calls the sheep, who know his voice. The Eastern shepherd often has an individual call for each of his sheep, & it is this that is in mind here. The sheep know their shepherd & recognize the call he gives his own.” (Leon Morris, op cit, p. 451)

? “Jesus assert[s] that the sheep recognize the voice of the shepherd but flee at the [stranger’s] voice. A common practice among shepherds was the ascription of names to various sheep...often based on some distinguishing

characteristic, including shape & size. More diligent shepherds would...count their sheep & use fixed ways of summoning them, not only calling them by a given name but also by means of a whistle.

These forms of

beckoning the sheep would’ve been recognizable to the flock & would have signaled the shepherd’s presence. At the allegorical level, Jesus is using this as a description of his familiarity with & perhaps

affection for his followers;...Again, we need to keep in mind that this [figure of speech] is intended to contrast Jesus, who is fit to lead, with the Jewish leaders, who are not.” (C. W. Skinner, “Good Shepherd Lays Down His Life,” CBQ, Vol. 80 p. 104)

b) Each and every sheep needs to follow the shepherd

? “They don’t become his sheep because they follow him. They follow him because they are his sheep.” (Matt Carter & Josh Wredberg, Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in John, p. 269)

2. The sheep hear the stranger’s voice and flee

? The sheep exhibit “unresponsiveness...towards the voice of thieves & robbers [‘not follow’ (10:5), ‘did not listen to them’ (10:8) or negative response (‘flee’)], but a positive response to Jesus’ voice [‘they will listen to my voice’ (10:16)]...The voice of Jesus defines who the sheep are (10:8-9).” (Brury E. Saputra, Shema & John, p. )

## E. The religious leaders did not understand Jesus’ words

### III. Jesus is the Gate/Door (Jn. 10:7-10)

? “The fuller explanation of these verses [10:7ff] cannot easily be accommodated as long as we think [wrongly] of 10:1-5 as a coherent narrative parable, & the verses [following 10:7ff]...as mere explanation of [10:1-5]...The tensions are largely alleviated when we recognize that the expansion of these verses [in 10:7ff] are not predicated on a single, narrative parable, but are further metaphorical uses of the three dominant features of the shepherding [‘figure’] in 10:1-5. [1.] ‘The Gate’...generates further metaphorical expansion in 10:7-10; [2.] ‘The Shepherd’...in 10:11-18; &... [3.] ‘His own Sheep’... in 10:11-18

&...10:26-30.” (D. A. Carson, John, pp. 383-4)

? “In this section of the discourse Jesus applies the saying to himself. There are two ways of viewing him, as the Door [/Gate] and as the Good Shepherd...Both have to do with salvation. As the Door[/Gate] he is the one way of entering salvation. As the Good Shepherd he is the one who cares for the sheep & provides for their salvation at the cost of his life.” (Leon Morris, op cit, p. 453)

? 10:7-10 “The coming of Jesus defines who the true shepherd is...Jesus is the only one capable of revealing the true shepherd from the false.” (Brury E. Saputra, Shema & John, p. )

### A. “I am the gate” (vv. 7, 9a)

? “[T]he primary point of...the gate imagery is the effect of the gate on the sheep themselves.

When Jesus identifies

himself as the gate for the sheep (v. 7), he points to the ways in which one’s place in the sheepfold, and hence one’s identity as a member of the flock, is determined exclusively by one’s relationship to Jesus as the gate. One enters the fold through Jesus.” (Gail O’Day, op cit, p. 569)

? “‘Door’ is used metaphorically in other places in the NT (Lk. 13:24; Acts 14:27; 1 Cor. 16:9), but this is the only passage

where Jesus himself is seen as the door. The thought is not unlike that of 1:51, where Jesus is the ladder connecting heaven and earth, or, 14:6, where he is the way, but here it gets its force from the imagery of the sheepfold. There is but one door to a fold, & sheep & shepherds alike must enter by this door. There is no other way for them.” (L. Morris, op cit, p. 453)

? “Most enclosures were lacking both a roof & a door. One way to ensure that sheep remained in the pen, especially

overnight, was to have the shepherd lie across the open threshold, &...literally serve as the door. The implied visual of

shepherds lying over the opening to the enclosure in which the sheep were kept has a point of connection with & likely

anticipates Jesus' announcement in 10:11 that he is the good shepherd." (C. W. Skinner, op cit, p. 105)

### **B. Anyone who enters through Jesus will be saved (v. 9b)**

? "Verse 9 incorporates OT imagery in its description of Jesus as the gate. The promise of entering through the gate to find

salvation echoes Psa. 118:19-20 & identifies Jesus as the point of access to God for the flock. The promise of finding pasture recalls the Pastoral imagery of Psalm 23:2 and Ezekiel 34:14." (Gail O'Day, op cit, p. 569)

? "The words 'through me' are in an emphatic position; it is he and no other who enables people to enter salvation

(14:6). There is a certain exclusiveness about 'the' door. If there is one door then people must enter by it or stay outside.

They cannot demand another door." (Leon Morris, op cit, p. 454)

1. Will be saved

? "That Jesus' self identification as the gate is primarily oriented to the life of the sheep is made even clearer in

verses 9-10. Jesus explicitly identifies himself as the means of salvation (14:)." (Gail O'Day, op cit, p. 569)

2. Will come in & go out

3. Will find pasture

### **C. A thief comes to steal, kill & destroy (vv. 8, 10a)**

? "All who came before me' cannot imply a sweeping rejection of OT figures...because Jesus has earlier referred to both Moses & Abraham as positive witnesses to him (5:45-46; 8:56). Rather, it refers to those like the Jewish leaders in John 5 & 9 who discount these witnesses to Jesus & thus attempt another means of access to the sheepfold." (G. O'Day, op cit, p. 569)

? "All who came before me' He must have in view the whole of the Jewish hierarchy of his day. They were not interested in the well-being of the sheep but in their own advantage. (Lk. 16:14; Mk. 12:40) for covetousness." (L. Morris, op cit, p. 454)

? "In a thinly veiled critique of the Pharisees, Jesus says that all who...preceded him are thieves & robbers (10:8)...These are the ones who enter the pen illegitimately & are not truly authorized to lead the flock (10:2). Jesus reiterates, "I am the door". As the means by which the sheep enter & exit... Jesus is the locus of their salvation...This...is followed by a particularly damning indictment of all who...preceded Jesus, but in the immediate context it is an indictment of the Pharisees, who are represented by the image of a 'thief'. They hide behind noble intentions, but their ultimate aim is to steal, kill, & destroy. By contrast, Jesus aims to provide life & abundance for the sheep/followers of God." (C. W. Skinner, op cit, p. 105)

### **D. Purpose: Anyone may have life in abundance (v. 10b)**

#### **IV. Jesus is the Good Shepherd (Jn. 10:11-18)**

? "At verse 11, the focus shifts to Jesus' self-revelation as the good shepherd. The identification of Jesus as the shepherd was implicit in the figure of speech in verses 1-5, but it is made explicit for the first time here." (O'Day, op cit, p. 567)

#### **A. "I am the good shepherd" (vv. 11a, 14)**

? "Jesus...draws on images derived from the OT to explain what he means by 'good shepherd.' The adjective 'good' also has the meaning 'model' or 'true,' & the reference point for what constitutes a model shepherd is set by the image of God as the good shepherd in Ezekiel 34...[There] God the good shepherd cares for the sheep, rescuing them,... feeding them, and tending to the weak, the injured, & the lost. By identifying himself as the good shepherd, Jesus thus identifies himself as fulfilling God's promise & doing God's work." (G. O'Day, op cit, p. 569)

? “Jesus presented himself as ‘the’ good shepherd par excellence. The contrast between the Jewish leaders of his day and Jesus himself only accentuated further, on the one hand, the way in which the Jewish leadership had usurped the role God had given them &, on the other, Jesus’ faithfulness to the God who had sent him.” (A. Kostenberger, op cit, p. 107)

? “A shepherd was a traditional metaphor for a ruler, and the image was used for the heir to David’s throne, the Messianic king who would provide for the people of God. To say, ‘I am the good shepherd’ means, in part, that Jesus is the Messiah whom God has sent to provide abundant life for others (Jn. 10:10, 14). The way Jesus does this, however, is by laying down his life for the sheep (10:11). He redefines Messiahship in terms of his crucifixion.” (Craig R. Koester, The Word of Life: A Theology of John’s Gospel, p. 95)

1. He lays down his life for the sheep (vv. 11b, 15b, 17, 18)

? “[Jesus] is showing what it means to see him as the Good Shepherd. The essential and central thing is the laying

down of his life.” (Leon Morris, op cit, p. 453)

? “Verse 11b pushes beyond the imagery of Eze. 34 in its reference to the shepherd’s willingness to lay down his life for the

sheep...The reader of the Gospel cannot help hearing in Jesus’ words an illusion to his own death. Verses 15,

17-18 will make those associations with the death of Jesus explicit...” (G. O’Day, op cit, pp. 569-70)

? “...Jesus lays down his life not simply because of his relationship to the sheep but because of his relationship with God.”

(Gail O’Day, NIBC: John, p. 570)

? “Like the hired hand in the shepherd passage, he could have run away to preserve himself from danger (10:13-15. But

he does not do so. Jesus lays down his life as his father wishes. If Jesus’ opponents see the cross as the outcome of

Jesus’ opposition to God, the evangelist regards it as the expression of the Son’s complete unity with the father’s

will.” (Craig R. Koester, The Word of Life: A Theology of John’s Gospel, p. 102)

2. Not merely risking his life, but voluntarily, intentionally laying it down

? This episode “depicts not merely a shepherd who is willing to risk himself for the protection of his sheep, but a

shepherd who intentionally ‘lays down’ his life for his sheep...This shepherd is not one who is merely willing to die; on

his own accord he must die. This shepherd is not one who might have to save the life of his sheep if a thief or wolf

happens to approach, but he must save the life of his sheep...[By dying,] this shepherd in giving life to his sheep. This is

a very different kind of shepherd &...a very different kind of shepherding.” (Ed Klink, John, p. 469)

3. He has other sheep not from this sheep pen (v. 16)

? “Jesus is suggesting here that his flock is not limited to the sheep of Israel & that the community created by his death

will include people from outside of Israel (12:32). The mark of this expanded flock will be that ‘they will listen to my

voice,’ a trait that distinguishes the flock from the Jewish leaders who neither listen to nor know Jesus’s voice.” (Gail

O’Day, op cit, p. 570)

a) He will bring them

b) They listen to his voice

c) The one shepherd will have one flock

? “The final image of verse 16 [is]...the vision of a united flock [and] recalls the final promise of Eze. 34:31: ‘You are

my sheep, the sheep of my pasture & I am your God.’ (NRSV) Jesus once again positions himself as the

fulfillment of promises traditionally associated with God. Jesus the Good Shepherd will bring about unity in the

flock through his relationship with God and his death.” (Gail O’Day, op cit, p. 570)

### **B. The hired hand (vv. 12-13)**

? “The image of the hired hand...has many echoes of the image of the bad shepherd in Ezekiel 34:5-6, 8-10, Jer. 23:1-3 &

Zech. 11:15, 17. The common denominator in these OT portraits...is the shepherd’s primary concern for his own well-being

at the expense of the flock’s well-being.” (Gail O’Day, op cit, p. 570)

? “The metaphor of the ‘flock,’ an everyday feature of Jewish life, pervades the OT. God himself was called the “Shepherd of

Israel” (Ps. 80:1; cf. Ps. 23; Isa. 40:10–11; Ezek. 34:11–16). Part of this imagery was also the notion of chief & undershepherds as well as that of hired hands. It was commonly known that if the flock was in danger, hired hands were likely to abandon the flock entrusted to them to save their own skin while the actual shepherd of the flock would

defend the safety of his sheep, if necessary even at the risk of his own life.” (A Kostenberger, op cit, p. 107)

1. He is not the shepherd of the sheep

2. He leaves the sheep when danger approaches

### **C. The good shepherd’s death and resurrection (vv. 17-18)**

1. Is in the context of his relationship of ‘love’ with God (vv. 17, 18c)

? “Verse 17 contains the first linkage of ‘love’ with Jesus’ death in [John’s] Gospel. God’s love for the world (3:16)

& for Jesus (3:35) are already known to the reader, & v. 17 adds a new dimension to that love. God loves Jesus because Jesus lives out God’s commandment fully (v. 18)...The sign of Jesus’ love for them is that he is willing to lay down his life for them (13:1; 15:13).” (Gail O’Day, op cit, p. 571)

? “It is wrong to read the phrase ‘for this reason’ (v. 17) as saying that Jesus wins the Father’s love through his death; rather, his death is the ultimate expression of the love relationship that already exists & defines who he is and how he enacts God’s will for the world.” (Gail O’Day, op cit, p. 571)

2. Is an act he freely chooses in obedience to God (vv. 17b, 18a)

? “Jesus is not a victim in death nor a martyr against his will, but is in control of his own death.” (Gail O’Day, op cit, p. 571)

3. Points to the inseparability of Jesus’ death and resurrection (vv. 17-18)

? “Jesus’ enactment of God’s work is incomplete until he returns to the father through his resurrection & ascension (13:1; 17:1, 4-5). Jesus reveals God’s will for the world not only in his death, but also in his victory over death through his return to God...In verses 17-18, Jesus speaks of himself as the agent of both his death & his resurrection. That is, whereas elsewhere in the NT God raises Jesus (Acts 2:24; 10:40; 1 Cor. 15:15; Gal. 1:1), here Jesus speaks of taking up his own life again.” (Gail O’Day, op cit, p. 571)

### **V. The Jews were Divided because of Jesus’ Words (Jn. 10:19-21)**

A. Many said, “He has a demon & is crazy. Why do you listen to him?” (v. 20)

B. Others said, "These aren't the words of someone who is demon-possessed. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?" (v. 21)