



LET'S BEGIN HERE

In the previous study, a sight-impaired beggar was healed. And when he opened his eyes, he opened his heart to the Light of the World. “Yes, Lord, I believe!” exclaimed the man to Jesus, worshiping Him with uncontainable joy (John 9:38). This man displayed genuine faith—with childlike humility and sincere love.

In contrast, the proud Pharisees turned a blind eye to Jesus and His amazing miracle. God’s power and mercy passed right in front of their eyes, but the Pharisees couldn’t see beyond their own egos and would never bow their knees to worship Jesus.

Commentator William Barclay sums up the central truth of John 9:

The man who is conscious of his own blindness, and who longs to see better and to know more, is the man whose eyes can be opened and who can be led more and more deeply into the truth. The man who thinks he knows it all, the man who does not realize that he cannot see, is the man who is truly blind and beyond hope and help.¹

These lessons about *spiritual sight* spill over into lessons about *spiritual leadership* in John 10. The Pharisees excommunicated the beggar, slamming the door of God in his face. But in John 10, Jesus, *the Living Door*, opened the way for anyone with an open heart to enter the fold of God. Additionally, Jesus, *the Good Shepherd*, gave His life for lost sheep and leads them into abundant life. Let’s take a closer look at these beautiful images of our caring Shepherd as we open His Word.

Quotable

Jesus gives us life abundantly, which means we have the real things in life that money can't buy: peace, purpose, and the joy of facing the grave without fear.

— Charles R. Swindoll





YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Observe the themes of John 10 by reading three central statements by Jesus as they appear in the New American Standard Bible.

“I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” (John 10:9–10 NASB)

“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” (10:11 NASB)

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.” (10:27–28 NASB)

Using your cursor, highlight the phrases that give you assurance and hope. And then, in prayer, thank the Lord for these spiritual blessings that flow from the heart of Jesus. Also, ask Him to reveal new insights about your relationship with your Good Shepherd through our study. Write your prayer below.



Searching the Scriptures Tip

We recommend reading more than one Bible translation. If you don't have different versions handy, there are plenty of Web sites that can help you, such as BibleGateway.com. Other tools include a Bible dictionary, such as *The New Unger Bible Dictionary*, and commentaries on John, such as Chuck Swindoll's *Insights on John*, which can be obtained through the Insight for Living Ministries online store.





Observation: The Teaching of Jesus

As a master teacher, Jesus often brought His principles to life with illustrations from the surrounding countryside. A shepherd leading sheep was one of the most familiar sights in Palestine. To fully appreciate the Master’s shepherd illustration in John 10, we must do a little research on shepherding practices in first-century Palestine.

Background

If you own a copy of Chuck Swindoll’s commentary *Insights on John*, read the introductory section for John 10 on pages 201–203. For an online resource, read the section “*The Shepherd and His Sheep*” (John 10:1–6) in William Barclay’s *The Gospel of John* in his Daily Study Bible series. As you read, look for these points:

- The close bond between the shepherd and his sheep
- The types of enclosures for sheep
- How the shepherd called his sheep and their response
- The ways the shepherd protected his sheep

What did you discover?

In what is called The Good Shepherd Discourse, Jesus instructed the crowd, explained His teaching, and then revealed a truth about future followers. Let’s follow our Shepherd as we learn from Him.

Jesus Instructs the Crowd—John 10:1–6

Read John 10:1–5. Shepherds in the same area often intermingled their flocks in a common enclosure for protection at night. How did the shepherds enter the communal pen in contrast to thieves who would try to take what doesn’t belong to them? And what was the role of the gatekeeper?



How did the sheep respond to their shepherd versus strangers? And how did the shepherd lead his flock?

Thieves sneaking over a wall into a sheepfold . . . a gatekeeper opening the gate to the true shepherd . . . the sheep following their shepherd but running from strangers. What do these images mean? The crowd got the picture; they just didn't get Jesus' point . . . "so he explained it to them" (John 10:7).

Jesus Explains His Illustration—John 10:7–15

Jesus painted Himself into the picture with two analogies: He is the gate—in Greek *thura*, which is translated into "door" in the New American Standard Bible. And He is the Good Shepherd—in Greek *o poimēn o kalos*, which, translated literally, is "the shepherd, the good."

When shepherds led their flocks to graze in the hills, they would herd them into a cave at night and lay down at the entrance to guard the sheep from predators or thieves. Perhaps Jesus had this image in mind when He said, "I am the gate for the sheep" (John 10:7). Read John 10:7–10, and use your observation skills to write down the contrasts between Jesus, "the gate", and the thieves and robbers.

	Jesus as the Gate	Thieves and Robbers
John 10:7–10		



While the “gate” image emphasizes *security*, the “good shepherd” image emphasizes *relationship*. Jesus loves His sheep with a sacrificial love (John 10:11) and knows them intimately (10:14). Read John 10:11–15, and write down the contrasts between Jesus as the Good Shepherd and the hired hand.

	Jesus as the Good Shepherd	The Hired Hand
John 10:11–15		

This section in verses 11–15 is bookended by a parallel thought. In verse 11, Jesus said that He “lays down His life for the sheep” (10:11 NASB) and in verse 15, “I lay down My life for the sheep” (10:15 NASB). These hints of Jesus’ death led Him to give us a glimpse into the future after His death and resurrection.

Jesus Reveals the Future

Read John 10:16–18, and write down the insights Jesus shared about His imminent death on the cross.

By means of His atoning sacrifice for sins (1 Peter 2:22–25), Jesus, the Shepherd, will call “other sheep” to follow Him and create “one flock.”



Correlation: The Other Sheep and the Flock

Let’s compare John 10:16 with the apostle Paul’s teaching in Ephesians 2:11–18. Based on what Paul wrote, who are those whom Jesus called “other sheep” that join the fold, and what is the “one flock” (John 10:16)?



Upon hearing Jesus, some of the crowd dismissed Him as “demon possessed and out of his mind” (John 10:20) while others countered, “This doesn’t sound like a man possessed by a demon! Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?” (10:21).

The contentious atmosphere stirred ominous storm clouds of hostility toward Jesus. A few months later, at the Feast of Dedication, also known as Hanukkah, those clouds grew into a thunderstorm when Jesus spoke once more on His identity as the good and rightful shepherd from God.

Hostile Discussion at Hanukkah

Read John 10:22–42. The scene was the temple in wintertime, just a few short months before Passover and Jesus’ Passion Week. Hanukkah celebrates the dedication of the temple in 165 BC, the highpoint of the Maccabean revolt that temporarily freed Israel. With independence fever running high, a mob surrounded Jesus and demanded that He announce clearly whether He was the next liberator of Israel. What was Jesus’ answer, and how did they react (John 10:22–33)?

What evidence did Jesus offer to prove that He was the Messiah, just not the one they wanted (10:34–38)?

Where did Jesus spend the remainder of the winter, and what was His reception there (10:39–42)?



Interpretation: Key Figures

Let’s sharpen our focus on the meaning of the key figures in this passage.



To whom may the *gatekeeper* who opened the gate for the shepherd refer, according to John 1:32–33? Why is it significant that the gatekeeper opened the gate only for Jesus and not for the thieves and robbers?

Jesus identified Himself as the *Good Shepherd*. He purposefully used the word *good* as opposed to *true*—as in “true bread” (John 6:33) and “true grapevine” (15:1)—to make a point of comparison. Israel had many bad shepherds throughout its history (Jeremiah 23:1–4 and Zechariah 11:15–17), and the current religious leaders were just as worthless. Jesus was not just *a shepherd*; He was *the Good Shepherd*. What qualities made Him good, according to John 10:3–4, 10–11, 14–15, 27–28?

The thieves, robbers, and hired hand all refer to the religious and political leaders of the day: Pharisees, scribes, priests, and kings. What characteristics described them (John 10:1, 8, 10, 12–13)?

Finally, the sheep were those who responded to Jesus with genuine faith, like the healed beggar in John 9 and the disciples “beyond the Jordan” who “believed in Jesus” (10:40, 42). What qualities described the sheep (10:2–5, 8–9, 16)?

How about you? Have you heard the Shepherd’s voice and followed Him as one of His sheep?





Application: Four Qualities of the Good Shepherd's Flock

If you are one of the sheep in the Good Shepherd's flock, then put into practice the following sheep-like qualities.

- *God's sheep are sensitive to His leading* (John 10:27). Listen for His voice, and run from the voice of false shepherds.
- *God's sheep are eager to obey His commands* (10:27). When He calls, come! As He leads, follow! He will take you to green pastures where you'll experience peace, purpose, destiny, and the next quality, confidence.
- *God's sheep are confident* (10:28). When we follow the Good Shepherd, we feel confident because He is near us, He knows us, and He protects us when the thief, Satan, tries to steal our souls.
- *God's sheep are secure* (10:29). The fruit of faith is the security of knowing our eternal life is assured. No one can snatch us from Christ's or the Father's hand. That's double security!

Has the Lord answered your prayer from the beginning of our study? What new insights has He taught you, and what can you apply today?



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, You have given me all I need to live abundantly. I desire to follow the Good Shepherd over mountains and through whatever valleys may lie before me. The way may be rocky and treacherous, but I will not fear; my Shepherd is with me, guiding me with His rod and staff. Thank You for the confidence and security I experience with You as a sheep in Your fold. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, vol. 2, (Chapters 8 to 21), rev. ed., The Daily Study Bible Series (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), 50.



FOLLOWING CHRIST . . . THE MAN OF GOD

The Living Door

John 10

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

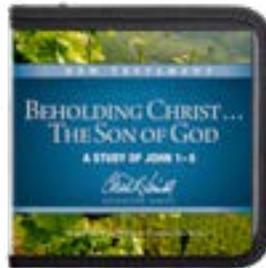
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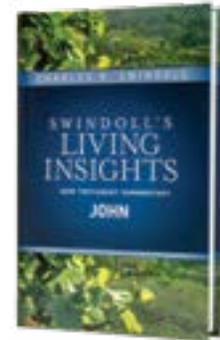
Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2018 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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