



That you may believe... Leaders Guide for Week 9

(Times are approximate) – start time: _____

Welcome

- You might ask them as they come in to select a favorite verse from the study this week so they can share a few minutes at the beginning.

(+7 min)

Opening prayer

- A wonderful study this week, you may ask that the Holy Spirit would reveal new truths to each in the group and would guide the discussion.

(+2 min)

Opening Comments

- This is a pivotal chapter because Jesus' self-revelation is completed for the religious leaders.
- His identity with His Father has been explicitly centered on Him being the Son of God.
- As a result of His testimony, we see more and more hostility growing toward Him in this chapter.
- John records a beautiful picture of Jesus as the Good Shepherd in these opening verses.
- The idea of a shepherd is woven throughout the imagery and language of the Bible.
- The main part of Judea was a central plateau, stretching from Bethel to Hebron for about 35 miles and its width varying from 14 to 17 miles.
- The ground was not fit for agriculture and was typically used as pastoral land.
- A shepherd's life was very difficult and dangerous.
- Flocks never graze without a shepherd and a shepherd is never off duty.
- Since grass was limited, the sheep were always wandering off and so the shepherd had to constantly watch the sheep.
- The land being rugged and having cliffs on either side of the plateau, there was a constant threat of a sheep falling to its death.
- Besides protecting the sheep from wandering, he was responsible to find grazing areas and water.
- The danger came in the form of wild animals, especially wild wolves, plus there were always thieves and robbers lurking about ready to steal the sheep.
- In this narrative, we can equate thieves and robbers as those who pretend to be shepherds.
- Last week we saw the Pharisees and religious leaders essentially try to **steal** the dignity of the blind man who was healed by Jesus by excommunicating him from the church.
- Essentially they were trying to **rob** God of the miracle Jesus performed on the man.
- False shepherds can **rob** in other ways such as hiding the truth of the Bible as it is given; deny the deity of Christ; discount the cause of the cross making it void!
- All these kinds of theology/humanistic views **rob** God of His sheep!
- What does the *gate* represent from a spiritual perspective?
- There are many viewpoints on this, but simply stated, the spiritual representation of the *gate* is found in all the Old Testament prophecies:
- Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah all prophesy Messiah and speak of true and false shepherds.
- Jesus entered in by the *gate* – He fulfilled all the prophecies of the Old Testament by God's authority.

- So we don't miss some important descriptions of false shepherds in these verses, here is a list:
 - 1) They gain entrance illegally; 2) they don't know the sheep; 3) they can't recognize true sheep (e.g., the blind man who was healed); 4) they won't be listened to by true sheep; 5) they can't contain true sheep – their excommunication of the blind man didn't change the truth!
 - When the shepherd calls the sheep they follow.
 - He called the blind man out from the false teachings of the Pharisees.
 - Jesus continually calls us out – He may call us out to a new job, a new ministry, a new responsibility, a new location – He is always calling us out.
 - Jesus calls us by name, He knows us inside and out, he knows how we are enthusiastic one week and drop out the next, we make commitments and don't keep them, we are prideful at times, He knows all this about us BUT He says to all believers:
 - “I made you in my image (**Genesis 1:26**) and now I am going to give you new life (**Romans 6:4**)
 - Christ viewed the shepherd as a type of self-sacrifice.
 - Characteristics of a good shepherd are: vigilance, fearlessness, courage, patient love for his flock.
 - This is the image we should have as we study **John 10:1-18**.
 - Some may know about the Feast of Dedication (**10:22**) but if not, here is a brief explanation.
 - This feast is also known as Hanukkah and is synonymous with the Feast of Lights.
 - **John 10:22** is the only place this Feast is mentioned in the Bible.
 - It developed during the era of the Maccabees and celebrated the cleansing of the Temple after its desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes.
 - This feast is observed on the 25th day of the ninth month.
 - A debate took place (**10:22-30**) while Jesus was walking in Solomon's Colonnade (a roofed portico on the east side of Herod's temple in Jerusalem).
 - Why didn't Jesus just answer what they were asking?
 - Here are some reasons: 1) they didn't believe the miracle of the lame man (chap. 5); they didn't believe His teachings and revelation of Himself (chap. 7); they didn't believe His testimony (chap. 8); they didn't believe His miracle of the blind man (chap. 9).
 - We need to understand their primary motive – *“For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill Him”* **John 5:18**
 - Jesus knew their hearts were hard and their ears were deaf by choice!
 - Jesus did answer their question but they misinterpreted it, He said, *“I and the Father are One”* **10:30!**
 - Whenever we approach Jesus, we must be careful to avoid doing so with wrong motives!
- (+12 min)

Discussion of the Study Lesson – (~33 min)

This week's title: The Good Shepherd - **John 10:1-42**

Highlighted verses: - *“I am the good Shepherd; I know My sheep and My sheep know Me.”* **John 10:14**

Day 1: Read John 10:1-42

1. **Read John 10:1-42** at least once, jotting down initial observations.

- Share with one another some of the interesting, confusing, challenging things people discovered.
- Encourage people to listen for answers to their questions (if they had any).

(+4 min)

Day 2: Read John 10:1-22

1. In this chapter Jesus uses images that would have been familiar to His hearers. Identify who or what these images represent:

- a) The sheep pen gate – (was Jesus)
- b) The Shepherd – (was Jesus)
 - A logical question would be, “How can Jesus be the Shepherd and the sheep pen gate?”
 - A common explanation is given by James Boice, “*The sheep pens in the countryside were nothing more than a rough circle of rocks piled into a wall with a small open space, a gate, through which the shepherd would drive the sheep for the night.*
 - *Since there was no gate to close – just the opening – the shepherd would keep the sheep in, and keep wild animals out, by lying across the opening.*
 - *He would sleep there, in this case literally becoming the gate.*
 - *Clearly, this is the kind of sheep pen about which Jesus is speaking in His parable.”¹*
- c) The thief and the robber – (those who do not believe and try to pull others away – Pharisees, teachers of the Law, Sadducees, false teachers/leaders, etc..)
- d) The sheep – (true believers)
- e) The hired hand – (people who pretend to be believers, maybe even think they are...)
(+4 min)

2. **Read verse 17-18.** How do these verses predict the cross and resurrection? Why do you think Jesus emphasizes that He lays down His life on His own accord?

- Be sure to get responses for both parts of this question.
- Part 1: This is Jesus’ third statement regarding the laying down of His life (**10:11, 15, 17**).
- These statements give the basis for Jesus’ sacrifice as the means of our reconciliation both to God and to one another.
- **1John 3:16:** “*This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.*”
- Part 2: Going to the cross was not something others forced on Jesus.
- Jesus was following the Father’s plan of redemption.
(+3 min)

3. How do **John 10:1-22** support that Christ is necessary and sufficient for salvation? (**See John 10:9**)

- **John 10:9** Jesus says, “*I am the gate*”.
- We must enter through Jesus to be saved.
- All that do enter this way are promised salvation.
(+3 min)

Day 3: Read John 10:22-42

1. In this passage, how are Jesus’ enemies different from His sheep (**vs 22-27**)?

- Enemies do not believe.
- They are not the sheep of Jesus.
- They do not enter the gate plus other possible answers.

(+2 min)

2. **Read John 10:25-30.** Can a true believer ever lose his/her salvation? Why should this give us hope and comfort?

- Be sure to get responses for both parts of the question.
- Part 1: **Vs 28** - no one can snatch Jesus' sheep from His hand.
- Part 2: Our security does not rest in our ability.
- We could not trust ourselves or God.
- Our trust is in the promises of Jesus through the Holy Spirit.
- This should give all believers great hope and comfort.

(+4 min)

Day 4: Read John 20:31

Consider how **John 10:1-42** relates to John's purpose in writing this Gospel. "...that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name" (**John 20:31**).

1. John's purpose involves *believing*. Look back over this chapter and note all the references to the word *believe*. How does this chapter help us to better understand what it means to *believe*?

- See verses: **25, 26,37 and 38**

(+3 min)

2. John's purpose involves life in His name. Look back over this chapter and note the references to *life*. How does this chapter help us to better understand the *life promised* in **John 20:31**?

- See verses **10 and 28**

(+4 min)

Day 5: Read John 10:1-42

1. This passage teaches us about Jesus' care for His sheep. From what this passage teaches, write down some specific ways Jesus cares for you.

-

(+3 min)

2. It is not uncommon for Christians to struggle with doubt. How do Jesus' words in this chapter help you when you struggle with doubt?

- Try to involve someone who hasn't said too much.

(+3 min)

Closing Comments

- In closing a few comments about how this chapter comes to an end.
- Jesus gives three very important arguments (10:34-38) to those ready to stone Him:

- 1) Jesus recalls Psalm 82:6, reminding them that God appointed some mere men as Judges and then called them “gods” (Hebrew *elohim*) because he authorized them to judge.
- Jesus was relating that if God gave this authority to ordinary mortals, how could Jesus be accused of blasphemy when God the Father set Jesus apart and sent Him into the world on this special mission?
- Jesus was not offering a false claim; He was merely asserting who He was by right!
- 2) Jesus said, “*Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does.*”(10:37)
- He was challenging them to test the signs He gave against Scriptures and see if He was doing anything the Father wouldn’t do.
- If not, they do not have an argument.
- 3) He gives a third argument, if they can’t believe the other two, then believe on the basis of the miracles He has performed.
- These are evidence Jesus leaves behind for us today too.
- The evidence of His authority over both the physical and spiritual realms.
- Jesus does escape and the chapter closes on a wonderful note (10:41b-42): “*They said, “Though John never performed a miraculous sign, all that John said about this man was true.”* **And in that place many believed in Jesus**”
- Don’t forget: **John 6:39** “*And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that I shall lose none of all that He has given Me, but raise them up at the last day*”
- So how will you be an ambassador for Christ? Who should you talk to about the good news of the gospel? Are you willing to die to self enough to approach people about Jesus Christ?

(+5 min)

Closing Prayer

- You might reflect on a couple of comments that were especially meaningful to the group.

(+1 min)

¹ James Montgomery Boice, “The Gospel of John volume 3,” 1999, ISBN 0-8010-1087-X, pg. 742