

DAILY TIME**SECTION 1 | JOHN 10:1-10**

Jesus and the Pharisees never seemed to get along. The Pharisees were always caught up in religious performance. Their influence over Israel was challenged the more Jesus taught and healed. They claimed to be on God's side, like a team of super religious people, but Jesus showed up—"God in the Bod"—and they couldn't stand him. The religious people couldn't stand God himself! So here in John 10, we find Jesus speaking directly to the Pharisees. He tells them a couple short parables to challenge their understanding.

¹Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. ²The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." ⁶Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

⁷Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. ⁹I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

- ❓ Jesus calls himself both the shepherd and the gate, what do these metaphors mean?
- ❓ Jesus says, “whoever enters through me will be saved.” How does this challenge the Pharisees?
- ❓ Jesus came to give “life to the full.” How does Jesus offer you “life to the full” today?

SECTION 2 | JOHN 10:11-21

One of the big problems with the Pharisees was that they thought God was only on their side. People who weren't like them and didn't follow the same religious rules were unwelcome and unworthy. In the last section, Jesus said that he is the gate, and only through him can we enter into God's life. In this passage he continues using the shepherd metaphor and extends it in surprising ways.

¹¹“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep.

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So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. ¹³The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

¹⁴“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—
¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. ¹⁷The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

¹⁹The Jews who heard these words were again divided. ²⁰Many of them said, “He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?”

²¹But others said, “These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

- ❓ What is paradoxical about verses 10 and 11?
- ❓ What does Jesus mean when he says, “I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen?”
- ❓ Jesus says he knows his sheep as intimately as he knows the Father. Does this intimate knowledge scare you? Does it encourage you? Why?

SECTION 3 | PSALM 23

Before King David was...*King* David...he was a shepherd. In fact, when the prophet Samuel went looking for a new king of Israel,

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he found David out with the sheep. King David was the precursor to the true king, the Good Shepherd (a descendant of David himself)—*Jesus!* Written by King David, Psalm 23 is one of the great passages in all of scripture. Read and reflect on how it points to Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

PSALM 23 A PSALM OF DAVID

¹The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

²He makes me lie down in green pastures,

he leads me beside quiet waters,

³he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths

for his name's sake.

⁴Even though I walk

through the darkest valley,

I will fear no evil,

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff,

they comfort me.

⁵You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

⁶Surely your goodness and love will follow me

all the days of my life,

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord

forever.

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❓ What does it mean for God to be your shepherd?

❓ How does this depiction of God encourage you?

GROUP TIME

WEEK 5 - THE ADMISSIONS OFFICE

Do you remember applying to school? For some of us it was more recent than others! You had to submit test scores, your GPA, and make yourself seem like you were going to be President by age 25. (Yeah, I know that isn't constitutionally possible, but whatever.) It was all about *your performance*. Who was worth giving scholarships to? Who measured up? Who gets in?

The Pharisees were kind of like the admissions office. They thought that the people who were good enough, who prayed enough or who were religious enough would get God's blessing. They thought everything depended on *their performance*. When Jesus showed up, he began to teach that God's kingdom was available to any who would believe in him. There was no measuring up, but simply the free gift of grace. Jesus—the Good Shepherd—invites us into “real and eternal life.” He is the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. *His performance* is our “admission” into life with God.

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JOHN 10:1-21 (MSG)

¹⁻⁵ “Let me set this before you as plainly as I can. If a person climbs over or through the fence of a sheep pen instead of going through the gate, you know he’s up to no good—a sheep rustler! The shepherd walks right up to the gate. The gatekeeper opens the gate to him and the sheep recognize his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he gets them all out, he leads them and they follow because they are familiar with his voice. They won’t follow a stranger’s voice but will scatter because they aren’t used to the sound of it.”

⁶⁻¹⁰ Jesus told this simple story, but they had no idea what he was talking about. So he tried again. “I’ll be explicit, then. I am the Gate for the sheep. All those others are up to no good—sheep stealers, every one of them. But the sheep didn’t listen to them. I am the Gate. Anyone who goes through me will be cared for—will freely go in and out, and find pasture. A thief is only there to steal and kill and destroy. I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.

¹¹⁻¹³ “I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd puts the sheep before himself, sacrifices himself if necessary. A hired man is not a real shepherd. The sheep mean nothing to him. He sees a wolf come and runs for it, leaving the sheep to be ravaged and scattered by the wolf. He’s only in it for the money. The sheep don’t matter to him.

¹⁴⁻¹⁸ “I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own sheep and my own sheep know me. In the same way, the Father knows me and I know the Father. I put the sheep before myself, sacrificing myself if necessary. You need to know that I have other sheep in addition to those in this pen. I need to gather and bring them, too. They’ll also recognize my voice. Then it will be one flock, one Shepherd. This is why the Father loves me: because I freely lay down my life. And so I am free to take it up again. No one

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takes it from me. I lay it down of my own free will. I have the right to lay it down; I also have the right to take it up again. I received this authority personally from my Father.”

¹⁹⁻²¹ This kind of talk caused another split in the Jewish ranks. A lot of them were saying, “He’s crazy, a maniac—out of his head completely. Why bother listening to him?” But others weren’t so sure: “These aren’t the words of a crazy man. Can a ‘maniac’ open blind eyes?”

❓ *“If a person climbs over or through the fence...”* What does this mean? What are some ways that we attempt to “climb over the fence” instead of entering through Jesus?

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❓ What does the “more and better life” of Jesus look like? What does “more and better life” not look like?

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❓ Does “real and eternal life” just mean living after we die?

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❓ Jesus calls himself the Good Shepherd. What does this mean to you?

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LIVING IT OUT

As a group, decide how you’re going to apply something from this week’s discussion. Write out what you decide here.

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