

I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD

We Long for Trustworthy Leadership

LESSON 2

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep.”

John 10:14



WELCOME

What qualities do you feel are most important in a trustworthy leader?

BACKGROUND

Most of us long for trustworthy leadership. This is true in politics, at church, from a boss, etc. While there are many examples of great leaders, there is much evidence, both in our culture and in our personal lives, that leaders often fall short. In contrast, Jesus stated that He is the Good Shepherd. He is a trustworthy leader and can be depended on both to care for and lead us well. He will never fall short.

Jesus' imagery of sheep and shepherds would have been familiar in a society where sheep and farming were staples of the economy. The Palestinian dry plains were well-suited for sheep. Sheep provided meat, wool, milk and lambs for sacrifices. Throughout the Old Testament shepherding was a common trade, and both Moses, who led the Israelites out of Egypt, and King David were shepherds. The Israelites were often referred to as sheep and their leaders were often referred to as shepherds. For centuries, the Jews had been looking for a new leader, the Messiah. The prophet Ezekiel referred to that Messianic leader as the Good Shepherd (**Ezekiel 34**). In **John 10:11–16**, Jesus claims He fulfills that hope.

While sheep are often thought of as adorable farm animals, they are also defenseless, prone to go astray, have poor eyesight, often follow other sheep without thinking and can be very stubborn.¹ They are totally dependent creatures, often lost and unable to find

¹ Wiersbe, Warren W. *Jesus in the Present Tense: The I Am Statements of Christ*. David C Cook, 2011. 81-82

their way back on their own, even within eyesight of the sheepfold.² Those of us who belong to Jesus are like sheep and need someone to lead and care for us. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, promises to do exactly that.

1. In our spiritual lives, what are some ways we can tend to be like this description of sheep?



WORD

As you come to the Word, pause and ask God to make it come alive for you.

Context: In **John 9**, Jesus healed a blind man and gave the crowd and the Pharisees much to think about when He claimed to be the Son of Man, a Messianic title.³ The Pharisees were skeptical of Jesus' claim, not because of insufficient evidence, but partly due to jealousy both of Jesus' popularity and His influence on the people.⁴ Consequently they were on alert in **John 10:11–16**,⁵ when Jesus spoke to both the crowds and the Pharisees in metaphors about sheep and shepherds. They understood this Old Testament metaphor; and Jesus used it, in part, to show that the Pharisees were failing as leaders of their flock, the people of Israel.⁶ Read Jesus' words in the passage below:

John 10:11–16

¹¹ ***"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep.*** ¹² *A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming. He will abandon the sheep because they don't belong to him and he isn't their shepherd. And so the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock.* ¹³ *The hired hand runs away because he's working only for the money and doesn't really care about the sheep.*

² Schaefer, Marjie L. *I Believe in the Name of Jesus: Knowing Jesus through His Seven "I Am" Statements*. Flourish Through the Word, 2015. 40

³ **Daniel 7:13–14**

⁴ *Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishers, 2007. 1772

⁵ **John 10:1–10**, where Jesus claims "I Am the Gate," will be addressed in Lesson 4.

⁶ Milne, Bruce. *The Message of John*. InterVarsity, 1993. 145

¹⁴ ***"I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me,*** ¹⁵ *just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep.* ¹⁶ *I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd.*

2. What action is taken by the Good Shepherd in **John 10:11**?⁷

3. "Without Christ's death for us there would be no hope for us."⁸
What do you notice in the following verses about the sacrifice made by Christ, our Good Shepherd?

a. **Romans 5:6–8**

When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

b. **Ephesians 5:2**

Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.

⁷ According to Scripture, humanity's sin would result in death, but instead Jesus substituted His death for ours. (**Romans 6:23**)

⁸ Barton, Bruce B. *John*. Tyndale House, 2004. 210

c. **Hebrews 9:12–15**⁹

With his own blood—not the blood of goats and calves—he entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever. Under the old system, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer could cleanse people’s bodies from ceremonial impurity. Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. That is why he is the one who mediates a new covenant between God and people,¹⁰ so that all who are called can receive the eternal inheritance God has promised them. For Christ died to set them free from the penalty of the sins they had committed under that first covenant.

d. **1 Peter 2:24–25**

*He personally carried our sins
in his body on the cross
so that we can be dead to sin
and live for what is right.
By his wounds
you are healed.
Once you were like sheep
who wandered away.
But now you have turned to your Shepherd,
the Guardian of your souls.*

⁹ In the Old Testament, the Jewish people were instructed by God to offer sacrifices, such as lambs, goats, calves and other animals to atone for their sins.

¹⁰ “Under the old covenant, the sheep died for the shepherds; but under the new covenant, the shepherd died for the sheep.” Wiersbe, Warren W. *Jesus in the Present Tense: The I Am Statements of Christ*. David C Cook, 2011. 83
Jesus’ sacrifice put an end to the Old Testament sacrificial system. It was no longer necessary to sacrifice perfect spotless animals in order to be cleansed from sin.

- e. How does Christ's sacrifice influence your view of Him as a trustworthy leader?
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- 4. What motivations did the hired hand have and what was the result? (**John 10:12–13**)
 - a. The Good Shepherd's motivations stand in stark contrast to the motivations of the hired hand. What are some of the motivations you see in today's leaders, both good and bad?

 - b. While you may not see yourself as a leader, we all have influence in the lives of others. What motivations do you see in your own life as you influence those around you?

 - c. How could having a self-sacrificial attitude or motivation change the way you or other leaders may act?

5. In **Ezekiel 34:1–8**, God spoke through the prophet Ezekiel criticizing Israel’s leaders for taking care of themselves rather than taking care of the people God had entrusted to them.¹¹ Read the passage below and underline the ways the leaders had mistreated God’s people.

¹ Then this message came to me from the LORD: ² “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds, the leaders of Israel. Give them this message from the Sovereign LORD: What sorrow awaits you shepherds who feed yourselves instead of your flocks. Shouldn’t shepherds feed their sheep? ³ You drink the milk, wear the wool, and butcher the best animals, but you let your flocks starve. ⁴ You have not taken care of the weak. You have not tended the sick or bound up the injured. You have not gone looking for those who have wandered away and are lost. Instead, you have ruled them with harshness and cruelty. ⁵ So my sheep have been scattered without a shepherd, and they are easy prey for any wild animal. ⁶ They have wandered through all the mountains and all the hills, across the face of the earth, yet no one has gone to search for them. ⁷ “Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: ⁸ As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, you abandoned my flock and left them to be attacked by every wild animal. And though you were my shepherds, you didn’t search for my sheep when they were lost. You took care of yourselves and left the sheep to starve.

6. The good news is that God did not and will not abandon His suffering people. In the following passages, how is God—the Good Shepherd—different from the bad shepherds in **Ezekiel 34:1–8** above?

a. **Ezekiel 34:10–16**

This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I now consider these shepherds my enemies, and I will hold them responsible for what has happened to my flock. I will take away their right to feed the flock, and I will stop them from feeding themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths; the sheep will no longer be their prey. “For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search and find my sheep. I will be like a shepherd looking for his scattered flock. I will find my sheep and rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on that

¹¹ *Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishers, 2007. 1354

dark and cloudy day. I will bring them back home to their own land of Israel from among the peoples and nations. I will feed them on the mountains of Israel and by the rivers and in all the places where people live. Yes, I will give them good pastureland on the high hills of Israel. There they will lie down in pleasant places and feed in the lush pastures of the hills. I myself will tend my sheep and give them a place to lie down in peace, says the Sovereign LORD. I will search for my lost ones who strayed away, and I will bring them safely home again. I will bandage the injured and strengthen the weak. But I will destroy those who are fat and powerful. I will feed them, yes—feed them justice!

b. Isaiah 40:11

He will feed his flock like a shepherd.

*He will carry the lambs in his arms,
holding them close to his heart.*

He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young.

c. Revelation 7:16–17

They will never again be hungry or thirsty;

they will never be scorched by the heat of the sun.

For the Lamb on the throne

will be their Shepherd.

He will lead them to springs of life-giving water.

And God will wipe every tear from their eyes.”

d. How do these passages speak to your longing for trustworthy leadership?

7. In **John 10:14–15**, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, said that He knows His sheep and they know Him. From your perspective, what does it look like for you to know Him?

a. **John 10:15** states we can know the Good Shepherd, Jesus, just as He knows the Father and the Father knows Him. Discuss the implications for you of being able to know the Good Shepherd that deeply and fully.

b. What is your response to this truth?

8. At the end of **John 10:16**, Jesus emphasized that He is the shepherd of one flock, and while in today's society there are a variety of different denominations and church structures, what unites Christians is that we all follow the Good Shepherd, Jesus. He longs for us to live together in unity. In the following verses, underline ways we can help fulfill His call to unity in our churches and beyond.
- a. **John 13:34–35** (Jesus speaking to His disciples)
So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.
- b. **1 Peter 3:8**
Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude.
- c. **Ephesians 4:2–4**
Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future.
- d. What is an area of challenge or struggle in your life right now when it comes to unity?
- e. How do you or can you contribute to unity within the body of Christ—the sheepfold?



WORSHIP

Take a moment to enter into a time of worship—both on your own and with your community—to show praise, adoration and love for God.

We long to be led by the Good Shepherd, yet His promises of care and leadership may feel elusive at times while we live in this broken world. While your life may not seem easy, Jesus' promises are true.

Take time to look back where He has met you, led you, cared for you, etc. Worship Him with thanksgiving for those times.

In what area(s) of your life do you feel like Jesus is calling you to trust His care and leadership more?

Bring those areas to Jesus and listen to His response.
Ask Him: What do You want to say to me about the care and leadership You are offering for this moment?



WITNESS

Believers are called to reflect Christ in the world. This section will help you engage with how to be a witness—reflecting Christ—this week.

Jesus' sheep will be gathered into one fold. Jesus showed and preached unity throughout His time on earth. According to **John 13:35**, His sheep will be known by their love for one another. Those who do not yet know the Good Shepherd will see and understand the Gospel better when His sheep love and care for each other.

How are you caring for other sheep in the fold, even outside your own church building?

Is there someone you need to lay down your life for or show love to in a particular way, whether that's through encouragement, acts of service, forgiveness, etc.?

Take some time to listen to Holy Spirit and make a specific commitment to one way you can love that person this week.

CONVERSATION PROMPTS

Consider using one of the conversation prompts this week to begin having a spiritual conversation with someone in your life.

- What qualities do you feel are most important in a trustworthy leader?
- What leader has the greatest influence on your life?
- In what ways do you struggle with leadership in this world?
- Here are some ways I have seen Jesus, the Good Shepherd, lead me in my life:
- What kind of leaders do you like to work under or follow?
- Who helps you process important decisions?

TAKE-AWAY SUMMARY

As you have worked through this lesson and listened to Holy Spirit, what is your one significant take-away?

Write a brief summary of your take-away on page 102.

SERMON NOTES

Lesson 2

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