

# I AM THE GATE<sup>1</sup>

## We Ache for Safety and Protection

### LESSON 4

*“I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. ... Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures.”*

**John 10:7, 9**



#### WELCOME

When or where do you feel safe (whether emotionally, physically, spiritually, psychologically, etc.)?

#### BACKGROUND

It is a common longing to want to feel safe and protected. This is why humans search for protection and care in a variety of ways, such as insurance, a good doctor, locks on doors, etc. While it is wise to have or implement things in our lives for protection, that protection can never be fully guaranteed. Jesus offers His followers a kind of safety and protection that is very different from what the world offers, and He always follows through with His promises.

As we learned in lesson 2, shepherds and sheep appear often in the Bible, both literally and metaphorically. Shepherding was one of the earliest professions, and some of the most well-known stories in the Old Testament feature people who were shepherds. In addition, throughout Scripture the image of a shepherd is used to illustrate leaders and sheep are used to represent followers. God is often described as Israel’s Shepherd (**Psalms 23:1; 80:1; 95:7; 100:3**), and the future Messiah is often prophesied using this imagery. (**Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel 34**)

Within the profession, a shepherd’s primary role was to protect the flock. “At night, the shepherd often would gather the sheep into a fold to protect them from thieves, bad weather, or wild animals. The sheepfolds were caves, sheds, or open areas surrounded by walls made of stones or branches, eight to ten

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<sup>1</sup> Sometimes translated as “door.” (NASB, ESV)

feet high. Sometimes the top of the wall was lined with thorns to further discourage predators and thieves.”<sup>2</sup> The shepherds would put themselves at the entrance in order to guard and protect the sheep. No sheep, person or animal could come in or out without the shepherd knowing. The shepherd literally became the door or gate.<sup>3</sup>

Another way shepherds protected and kept their sheep safe was by teaching their flock a specific and unique call. While sheep were not known for their intelligence, they learned and responded only to the call of their shepherd. That’s how the shepherd would lead them to water, pasture and shelter, and also separate them from other flocks.<sup>4</sup> Shepherds never left their sheep unattended; they constantly watched, protected and comforted them.<sup>5</sup>

1. What new or significant information did you learn about the relationship between shepherds and their 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.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, the Pharisees were on alert when Jesus spoke to them and the crowds

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<sup>2</sup> Barton, Bruce B. *John*. Tyndale House, 2004. 204

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 206

<sup>4</sup> Matte, Gregg. *I Am Changes Who I Am*. Baker Books, 2014. 132-134; Barclay, William. *The Gospel of John*. Vol. 2, Westminster Press, 1975. 55-57

<sup>5</sup> Youngblood, Ronald F. *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. HarperCollins Christian Pub, 2014. 1055

<sup>6</sup> **Daniel 7:13–14**

<sup>7</sup> Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation. Tyndale House Publishers, 2007. 1772

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.<sup>8</sup> Lesson 2 focused on **John 10:11–16**; in this lesson we will look at the preceding verses, **John 10:1–10**. Enter into Jesus' teaching:

### **John 10:1–10**

<sup>1</sup> *"I tell you the truth, anyone who sneaks over the wall of a sheepfold, rather than going through the gate, must surely be a thief and a robber! <sup>2</sup> But the one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup> The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup> After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice. <sup>5</sup> They won't follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don't know his voice."*

<sup>6</sup> *Those who heard Jesus use this illustration didn't understand what he meant, <sup>7</sup> so he explained it to them: "**I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep.** <sup>8</sup> All who came before me were thieves and robbers. But the true sheep did not listen to them. <sup>9</sup> **Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures.** <sup>10</sup> The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.*

2. What do you learn about the thief? What do you learn about the gatekeeper and the shepherd? (**John 10:1–3**)<sup>9</sup>
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What happens to the sheep that know the voice of their shepherd (**10:3**)? How do the sheep respond? (**10:4–5**)

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<sup>8</sup> Milne, Bruce. *The Message of John*. InterVarsity, 1993. 145

<sup>9</sup> In this text, Jesus is both the gatekeeper/gate (**10:7, 9**) and the shepherd. (**10:2**)

4. Jesus is the Good Shepherd (**John 10:11**) and, as believers, we are His sheep. Why do you think it is so important for us to know the voice of our Shepherd?
- a. Who or what you listen to tends to lead you.<sup>10</sup> Who or what do you regularly listen to?<sup>11</sup>
- b. Learning to recognize the voice of our Shepherd is a lifelong journey. How do the following verses shed light on some ways to get to know His voice?
- i. **Psalm 19:1–4**
- The heavens proclaim the glory of God.  
The skies display his craftsmanship.  
Day after day they continue to speak;  
night after night they make him known.  
They speak without a sound or word;  
their voice is never heard.  
Yet their message has gone throughout the earth,  
and their words to all the world.*

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<sup>10</sup> Matte, Gregg. *I Am Changes Who I Am*. Baker Books, 2014. 135

<sup>11</sup> For example: media, family, friends, etc.

ii. **Psalm 19:7–8**

*The instructions of the LORD are perfect,  
reviving the soul.*

*The decrees of the LORD are trustworthy,  
making wise the simple.*

*The commandments of the LORD are right,  
bringing joy to the heart.*

*The commands of the LORD are clear,  
giving insight for living.*

iii. **John 14:26**

*But when the Father sends the Advocate as my  
representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you  
everything and will remind you of everything I have told  
you.*

iv. **1 Corinthians 2:16**

*For, “Who can know the Lord’s thoughts? Who knows  
enough to teach him?” But we understand these things, for  
we have the mind of Christ.<sup>12</sup>*

v. **John 16:13–15**

*When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all  
truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he  
has heard. He will tell you about the future. He will bring me  
glory by telling you whatever he receives from me. All that  
belongs to the Father is mine; this is why I said, ‘The Spirit  
will tell you whatever he receives from me.’*

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<sup>12</sup> **John 14:23** helps explain how we can have the mind of Christ. *Jesus replied, “All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home with each of them.”*

c. What has it looked like in your life to recognize God's voice and be led by Him?

d. Some of us may still wonder how to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd. How can the following quote help you distinguish between the voice of the Shepherd and the voice of the enemy?

“Simply put, the Good Shepherd speaks truth and leads us to fertile fields. The enemy speaks lies and leads us to barren wastelands. Listen for life, and choose it. When you hear a whisper in your heart, ask if it is truth or a lie; if it's life giving or defeating. Then choose the truth and the life, and you are on your way to delighting in your Shepherd.”<sup>13</sup>

e. What practical steps can you take this week to listen for the Good Shepherd's voice?

5. What does Jesus claim about Himself in **John 10:7–9**, and what does that reveal to you about His character? (Also see the background information on page 47 to help you answer.)

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<sup>13</sup> Matte, Gregg. *I Am Changes Who I Am*. Baker Books, 2014. 139

Jesus is the Gate, the only way to eternal life (**John 14:6; Ephesians 2:18; John 3:16**). Eternal life means eternal safety and protection. All we have to do to receive it is walk through the gate. What does eternal safety and protection mean to you? How does it affect your life now?

6. What differences do you see between the intentions of the thief versus the intentions of Jesus, the shepherd/gate, from **John 10:10**?

What do you think it means to have a rich and satisfying life, or abundant life,<sup>14</sup> as Jesus promised?

7. One of the key ways that God provides abundant life is by covering His sheep with His protection. God's protection doesn't guarantee that we won't suffer in this life, but His followers are secure in His hands and He can rescue them from spiritual harm. Read through the following verses and underline the ways that God protects His people.

- a. **Psalm 46:1–3**

*God is our refuge and strength,  
always ready to help in times of trouble.  
So we will not fear when earthquakes come  
and the mountains crumble into the sea.  
Let the oceans roar and foam.  
Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge!*

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<sup>14</sup> NASB, ESV

**b. Psalm 34:4–7**

*I prayed to the LORD, and he answered me.  
He freed me from all my fears.  
Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy;  
no shadow of shame will darken their faces.  
In my desperation I prayed, and the LORD listened;  
he saved me from all my troubles.  
For the angel of the LORD is a guard;  
he surrounds and defends all who fear him.*

**c. Psalm 91:14–15**

*The LORD says, “I will rescue those who love me.  
I will protect those who trust in my name.  
When they call on me, I will answer;  
I will be with them in trouble.  
I will rescue and honor them.*

**d. 2 Corinthians 4:8–9**

*We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed.*

**e. Romans 8:38–39**

*And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**f. How have you experienced the Good Shepherd’s safety and protection?**



## 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.**

Psalm 23 gives a beautiful picture of God as the protective Shepherd. Spend some time meditating on it. Give yourself space to quiet your heart and mind. Take time to slowly read through it three times. Use the prompts below to give you a focus on each of the read-throughs.

**On your first reading:** Notice how God protects.

**On your second reading:** Notice how God cares and provides.

**On your third reading:** Turn Psalm 23 into a prayer of thanksgiving. (Example: Lord, thank You for being my shepherd and giving me what I really need.)

<sup>1</sup> *The LORD is my shepherd;  
I have all that I need.*

<sup>2</sup> *He lets me rest in green meadows;  
he leads me beside peaceful streams.*

<sup>3</sup> *He renews my strength.  
He guides me along right paths,  
bringing honor to his name.*

<sup>4</sup> *Even when I walk  
through the darkest valley,  
I will not be afraid,  
for you are close beside me.  
Your rod and your staff  
protect and comfort me.*

<sup>5</sup> *You prepare a feast for me  
in the presence of my enemies.  
You honor me by anointing my head with oil.  
My cup overflows with blessings.*

<sup>6</sup> *Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me  
all the days of my life,  
and I will live in the house of the LORD  
forever.*



## 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, the Gate, was often found associating and talking with known sinners and other people the religious leaders found undesirable (**Luke 15:1–2**). When the religious leaders complained, Jesus told them a parable (story) about a lost sheep:

*“If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won’t he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders. When he arrives, he will call together his friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.’ In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven’t strayed away!”* **Luke 15:4–7**

Jesus wants everyone to come to Him—to walk through the gate to safety and protection. He has called His children to help bring this message to those who are lost, like the one sheep. However, He doesn’t ask us to do it in our own strength.

How can knowing and trusting Jesus’ voice help you share Jesus’ message with the lost “sheep” around you?

How can being under His protection help calm any fears you may have about having spiritual conversations?

## **CONVERSATION PROMPTS**

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

- What makes you feel safe or secure?
- When you think about the future, what feelings come to mind? Do safety and protection come to mind? In what way?
- How is safety over or undervalued in our world?

## **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 4

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, occupying most of the page. It is intended for the user to write their sermon notes for Lesson 4.

