

WEEK 4 – I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD

MONDAY – The Good Shepherd and His sheep



John 10: 1–5 (NIV) *“Very 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. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.”*

John 10: 14–15 *“I am the good shepherd; I know My sheep and My sheep know Me — just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father—and I lay down My life for the sheep.*

In Jesus’ day, sheep pens were usually a rock wall with only one entrance for the sheep to go in and out. Some of the greatest people named in the Bible were shepherds by occupation: Abel, Moses, and David, to name a few. Even today in the Holy Land, you may see shepherds leading their flocks. They know them intimately. They know each sheep, its traits, and its needs. In biblical times the shepherds did not tend the sheep in order to slaughter them, unless they were used for sacrifice.

Shepherds tended them so that the sheep would provide wool, milk, and lambs.

Jesus Christ knows you completely! There may be times when you are a mystery to yourself, but you are never a mystery to Christ.

Reflection:

What do you think is the importance of Jesus saying, “I am the Good Shepherd,” versus just saying “I am the Shepherd?”



Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for leading me in times of uncertainty. Thank you that You know my voice. Help me to hear Your voice. AMEN

TUESDAY – ‘I just wanna be a sheep’



Psalm 121: 8 The psalmist said, *“the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore”*.

The fact that the sheep pen only has one entrance or gate was deliberate. It meant that the shepherd knew where his sheep were. They came into the pen for rest and security and protection from predators and went out through the same gate to go and find pasture and enjoyment (sheep love grazing!)

The Bible compares people to sheep. We spend our lives travelling through a similar doorway. We are constantly searching either for familiarity or returning to security. We are often very predictable.

Most of us have well-trodden paths leading to familiarity and security. Like sheep, we constantly come in and go out.

Reflection:

How much are you a creature of habit?

What are some of your routine habits?

What are ways in which you seek refreshment and energy?

Were you aware of God watching over you and protecting you today?

What does it mean to you to say, “God watches over my coming in and going out?”

Many passages of the Bible speak of our coming in and going out. God knows our need for joy, abundance, and feeling alive as well as our need for security, comfort and protection. Jesus calls Himself a Good Shepherd because He provides security and comfort in the lives of those who seek Him.



Prayer: Thank you Father God for constantly watching over my coming out and going in. Enfold me with Your goodness and love.
AMEN

WEDNESDAY – Wholly owned by God



John 10: 7-9 (ESV) *So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.*

John 10: 11 & 12 (NIV) *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away.*

Years ago when you turned 21 you “got the key of the door”. These days most of us had the key to our parental home long before 21. In biblical times there was often a ‘watchman’ who had the key to the sheep enclosure. He would open the gate for the shepherd who paid rent. If someone climbed over the wall; it meant that they were up to no good and wanted to steal the sheep. They weren’t out to harm the sheep. They would need the sheep to be in good condition so that they could sell them for their own gain.

Have you ever known people like that? They weren’t out to cause you harm, but they really didn’t care about your well-being – they cared what you could do for them. Maybe they wanted to be around you for

your generosity. The only time you heard from them was when they had something to ask.

What a marvellous thing to be wholly owned by the Son of God! The contrast here is with the hired hand. The hired hand “does not own the sheep” (10:12). The hired hand has no real investment in the flock. The only interest he has is being paid to look after it.

Deep inside every human heart is a desire to be loved. We want to know we matter and that someone genuinely cares about us. Jesus said, “I am the Good Shepherd” because He comes through the gate. He’s paid the rent. He has invested in us. We matter to Him.



Prayer: Thank you Lord that You know my name and that I matter to You. Lord I want to have a relationship with You. Help me to know you better. AMEN

THURSDAY – Counting sheep



John 10: 29-30 *Christ's sheep are in His hand. That's the answer! Nothing or no one will snatch us out of His hand. And as if that wasn't enough, our Lord adds, "No one is able to snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one".*

When the shepherds were out in the countryside they did not have a permanent structure with high walls and a locked gate. They had sheepfolds. Here the threat to the sheep was not bandits and thieves, but rather predatory animals. At night the shepherd would herd the sheep into the fold. Whilst the fold had walls, there was no door or locked gate. The shepherd would lie down in the doorway at night to protect the sheep.

Sheep are restless creatures. Arthur W. Phillip Keller spent time as a sheep rancher in Africa. He related his experience as a shepherd to his faith in Christ, the Good Shepherd. He said the four conditions that sheep need to lie down are they must be: free of fear; free from friction with others in the

flock; free from parasites and pests and free from hunger.

Reflection:

Can you relate to being like a sheep?

Have you ever had anything bother you to the point that you cannot sleep? Maybe a very real threat you are facing, friction with someone, or an issue that keeps annoying you – where you would lie down to rest, but your mind would continue to race. So much for counting sheep!

What helps the sheep lie down? They see the shepherd in the opening of the sheepfold. They know the shepherd is between them and the object of their worries. They focus on the shepherd. We too need to focus on the Shepherd. He is between us and our worries.



Prayer: Thank you Lord that You are the Good Shepherd and we are Your sheep. Help us to focus on You in times of uncertainty and stress. Help us to know that nothing can pluck us out of Your hand. AMEN

FRIDAY – Fingers crossed



Psalm 23: 3 & 4 *He refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for His name's sake. Even 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.*

It's hard to talk about the Good Shepherd and not think of the 23rd Psalm. In the fourth verse it says, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death". Though I walk *through*. Leonard Sweet notes that there are two significant words in that sentence, *though* and *through*, and observes the one simple difference between them. The letter R.

He goes on to point out the American Sign Language symbol for R – crossed fingers. In the early days of the Christian faith, people made a similar gesture with their fingers. They crossed the index and middle fingers as a sign of the cross. It was a way of identifying themselves with each other.

Somehow over the years crossed fingers changed meaning. Many people cross their fingers for good luck. They cross their fingers in the

hope of passing an exam or the Bulls winning the rugby match.

How did crossed fingers come to mean 'good luck'? In his book "The God We Can Know" Rob Faquay has a theory that early Christians not only crossed their fingers to identify themselves but also as a way of claiming God's presence with them knowing that He was by their side. Christ turns a *though* into *through*.

Though I am facing this layoff; *though* I have received this bad news about my health; *though* my child is hurting ... Christ is with me I will get *through*.

May your testimony be someone who knows that God wants a relationship with you and that Christ turns your *though* into *through*.



Prayer: Heavenly Father help me to put my trust in You in everything that I do. Thank You that You walk beside me and guide my steps.
AMEN.