



## CHAPTER 3

# JESUS the SHEPHERD

## John 10

*The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

PSALM 23:1

Toward the beginning of my arduous journey out of the pit, one of the first places in the Bible to which the Holy Spirit led me was John chapter 10. It stirred so many emotions within me, emotions that needed to be awakened because my soul had been relentlessly sucked into the black hole of depression. I felt like a walking shell of a person.

I read 'The sheep hear his voice' (v. 3), and my heart broke with longing to hear *only* His voice rather than the whispers of the enemy as that wretched creature spun lies in my head.

'A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him...' (v. 5). How I longed to flee from this sinister stranger but for some strange, supernatural reason I could not escape him. He has a measure of authority in this world, and I need the Lord at all times to arm me against his evil schemes.

'I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture' (v. 9). I praised the Lord, resting secure in the knowledge of my salvation, and finding that my only true rest during this disease came when I was able to find pasture in Him.

'I came that they may have life and have it abundantly' (v. 10). One day I wrote in my journal, *Jesus came so that I might flourish—live life*

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*to the full. Abundantly. It is for freedom that I have been set free (Gal. 5:1). For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: you shall love your neighbor as yourself (Gal. 5:14). I have been set free to love; to love well. Dear Lord, help me to love well in my mothering, as a wife, as a daughter and as a friend. Praise be to God! In my weakness you are strong. Let me rely on your strength every day, every moment. I love you. Amen. Isaiah 53:6 says 'We all, like sheep, have gone astray...'* (NIV). I am that sheep who has gone astray, but our God is in the business of rescuing His children, and He rescued me with an unabashed love that knows no end.

'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep' (v. 11). As I thought of this extravagant sacrifice that my Shepherd King made for me and for every single one of His precious children, I wept—greater love has no one than this.

'I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me' (v. 14). *I AM KNOWN*. What a reason to rejoice! Without a doubt, no matter how lonely I feel, my Shepherd knows me. These words began to fill the cracks and crevices of my broken soul. They were like the liquid bandage that held me together as the healing began. They gave me strength that I had not felt in months. Most of all, they sparked a determination that I would fight this disease with everything in me because the Creator of the universe was the one providing my armor and weaponry. I was reminded of Ephesians 6:14-18:

Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.

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I was not left alone to fight the battle. God was before me and behind me, surrounding me completely with His perfect love and reminding me that I am one of His own and He knows me. And not only does He know me like this, but He knows *every single one* of His children like this.

‘So there will be one flock, one shepherd’ (v. 16). He will demolish all the barriers that divide us in this world—the broken will be made whole. Our hope will be fully realized when Revelation 7:9-12 comes to pass.

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’ And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, ‘Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.’

John 10 is so rich with substance and sustenance. It will nourish our souls as we learn more about our great Savior, the Lamb who was slain, the Shepherd of our souls. ‘I know my own and my own know me.’ He knows you. He knows what makes your heart break, what causes your emotions to soar, what overwhelms you with joy, what drags you to the depths of despair. He knows your every thought, your every breath, your every longing and desire. Not only does He *know* you, but He *loves* you with a love far deeper than anything you can possibly imagine. The proof is in His death. The life is in His resurrection. Praise be to God.

## ***HOMEWORK & REFLECTION***

### **DAY 1**

1. Read slowly through John 10. Meditate on each phrase, word and idea. Read it several times through, perhaps even out loud. Use the cross-references in the footnotes of your Bible if you like. Jot down anything that comes to mind as God's Word speaks to you. This practice will really help you own it.

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2. Notice any repeated words or phrases. Write down what you think their significance might be. Find all references to sheep and shepherds and any other imagery used in this passage. Record your thoughts as God's Word speaks to you.

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### **DAY 2**

1. Let's focus on verses 1-6 today. Before anything else though, go back and read the story recorded in John 9 so that you better

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understand the context of Jesus' discourse in chapter 10. In John 9 we see Jesus perform a mind-blowing miracle! He heals a man born blind, and that man exclaims, 'Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing' (9:32-33). The unbelieving Pharisees are infuriated and Jesus is compassionate. We see a beautiful eyewitness account of a man coming to faith in this chapter. And we also see Jesus pointedly calling out the Pharisees. Record any observations you have of John 9 that really speak to you.

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2. Now read through John 10:1-6 and let your mind ponder these verses. How do these words of Jesus that immediately follow His pronouncement to the Pharisees, 'If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, "We see," your guilt remains' (9:41), relate to that pronouncement? What thread do you see joining John 9 and John 10?

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3. When you read verses 1-6, what makes sense? What puzzles you? After answering these questions, spend some time praying to God for wisdom and understanding as you continue studying His Word. Thank Him for revealing Himself to you and don't be afraid to ask Him for more! Praise Him for being the great God that He is.

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## DAY 3

1. Our focus today will be on verses 7-21, but we're first going to look back in Scripture, this time not just one chapter back but several centuries. Read Ezekiel 34:1-10 and then read John 10:7-21. How does the Ezekiel passage expand your understanding of what Jesus is saying to the Pharisees here?

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2. What do you think Jesus means when he says, 'I am the door of the sheep' (v. 7)?

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3. In your life, what does it look like to have life 'abundantly' (John 10:10)? Do you experience the abundant life? Do you struggle to grasp the meaning of this abundance?

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4. Contrast the good shepherd with the thief/robber in verses 1, 5, 8, and 10 and the hired hand in verses 12-13.

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5. Look at how many times Jesus talks about laying down His life in this passage. Read those verses and then focus in on verses 17-18. Discuss Jesus' authority. What is Jesus' role in His own death? Where does He get His authority?

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6. We would be remiss to skip over the reaction of the Jews to these unprecedented words from the lips of Jesus. What do you see happening in verses 19-21?

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**DAY 4**

1. Read through John 10:22-39. About two months have passed between verse 21 and verse 22. The Feast of Dedication is what we know of as Hanukkah, which is a Hebrew word that means 'dedication.' It celebrates the result of the Maccabean Revolt from 167-160 B.C. in which Judas Maccabaeus led the Jewish people against a madman named Antiochus Epiphanes, who began ruling in the area in 175 B.C. and completely desecrated the Temple.



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Ultimately the revolutionaries cleansed the Temple and reinstated proper Jewish worship there, and the Feast of Dedication was instituted to remember and celebrate this victory.<sup>1</sup>

So here we have Jesus, walking in the Temple during this Feast, and the Jews (these are the unbelieving Jews) confront Jesus. What do they say to Him and how does He respond?

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2. What warning do you find implied in Jesus' words in verses 25-29? What security does Jesus offer?

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3. Do you experience this security in your day-to-day life? Explain.

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1 Hughes, R. Kent. *John: That You May Believe*, pp. 275-6.

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4. The tension is at an extremely high point in verse 31. The unbelieving Jews are ready to put Jesus to death—why? What do you think of Jesus’ response to them in verses 32-38?

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5. Read Psalm 82:6. Does this help you understand John 10:34-36 at all? Jesus is basically saying, ‘If you want to get technical, it is not blasphemy for me to call myself the Son of God.’ In the same breath, however, He asserts that He most definitely is God. Comment on John 10:37-38.

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**DAY 5**

1. Now read John 10:39-42. Just picture this emotionally charged scene, where voices surely were not gentle. Imagine the riotous nature of it all, the men ready to stone Jesus, on the verge of violence, shouting at Him, jeering at His words. They try to arrest Him and lead Him to His death. Jesus is close to the road to Calvary but isn't there just yet. His hour has not yet come, and He evades the Jews who are trying to destroy Him. His work on the earth is not finished. What beautiful scene do you encounter in verses 40-41 that is in stark contrast to the scene from which Jesus just escaped?

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2. Read John 1:19-34. What did John the Baptist testify about Jesus?

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3. What was John the Baptist's purpose as we read in John 1:6-8?

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4. What is the result of Jesus' actions in this place (see v. 42)?

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5. Now read John 20:30-31. These verses actually sum up the purpose that John the Evangelist had when he wrote this Gospel. Write down what you find in 20:31.

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The word 'life' in verse 31 is not just eternal life, but it also refers to the life here and now that is experienced as a believer in Christ. It is

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the abundant life that Jesus promised in John 10:10. We don't have to wait for heaven to have life in His name! Take some time to think about *your* life in Jesus' name. Remind yourself of John 10:14. You are *known*. Write about that. Do you have that life? If not, it is yours for the taking if you just believe!

***The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.***

**PSALM 23:1**