

John Lesson # 11 Articles

John 10:1–6 These first six verses are a picture of the relationship between the shepherd and his sheep. Verse 6 calls this a “parable” but a better word is allegory. Christ is merely reminding the people of what shepherds and sheep act like. Later in the chapter He makes a more direct application.

The Middle Eastern sheepfold was very simple: a stone wall, perhaps ten feet high, surrounded it, and an opening served as the door. The shepherds in the village would drive their sheep into the fold at nightfall and leave the porter to stand guard. In the morning each shepherd would call his own sheep, which would recognize their shepherd’s voice and come out of the fold. The porter (or one of the shepherds) would sleep at the opening of the fold and actually become “the door.” Nothing could enter or leave the fold without passing over the shepherd. Christ points out that the true shepherd comes through the door (v. 1), calls his sheep by name, which recognize him (v. 3), and leads the sheep, which follow (vv. 4–5). False shepherds and strangers, who are thieves and robbers, try to get into the fold some subtle way, but the sheep will not recognize or follow them.

John 10:7–21 . *The door* (vv. 7–10) Jesus Christ is the door, and as such He leads the sheep “in and out.” The blind man in chapter 9 was “cast out” (excommunicated) by the false shepherds because he trusted Jesus, but he was taken into the new fold by Christ. Theologian Arthur Pink points out that there are really three doors spoken of in this chapter, and we must distinguish them if we are to get the full meaning of this explanation:

(1) “*The door into the sheepfold*” (v. 1). The sheepfold here is not heaven but the nation of Israel (see Ps. 100). Christ came to Israel through the way appointed in Scripture; the porter (John the Baptist) opened the door for Him.

(2) “*The door of the sheep*” (v. 7). This is the door that leads people out of their present fold; in this case, Judaism. Christ opened the way for multitudes to leave the old religious system and find new life.

(3) *The door of salvation* (v. 9). The sheep using this door go in and out, which speaks of liberty; they have eternal life; they enjoy the pastures of God’s Word. Satan, through his false teachers (thieves and robbers), wants to steal, kill, and destroy the sheep; but Christ gives abundant life and cares for the sheep.¹

Jesus is not one of *many* doors to the Father, but the *only* door. He never claimed to be one route among several to an intimate relationship with God, but insisted He was the only way. If Jesus willingly gave His life to save ours, how can we think He would ever keep back from us anything that would truly benefit us? He is the *good* shepherd, not the stingy shepherd or the tightfisted shepherd. God gave Jesus the authority both to offer His life as a sacrifice for our sins and to rise from the dead in power and great glory. Jesus’ death and resurrection were equally planned from eternity (Rev. 13:8).²

The image of the shepherd is an extremely important biblical picture of a “leader” (Num 27:17) because it implies not only an intensely personal relationship between God’s people and their leaders but a style or model of leadership exemplified by Jesus (cf. Mark 6:34). The very word “leadership” is developed from the shepherd imagery, where the shepherd goes before the flock and encounters the problems of the flock first. The shepherd does not issue commands in a pyramid fashion down to subordinates who carry out his wishes like a general or admiral who stays back out of range of the conflict; nor is a shepherd a whip-carrying organizer who drives the sheep into the pen or to a particular pasture. But the shepherd knows the setting, leads the sheep, and they follow him (cf. John 10:4). Sometimes “leaders” today are like the strangers of this text, whose voices are unknown to the sheep, and they wonder why there are problems in their organizations (cf. 10:5)!³

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). *Wiersbe’s expository outlines on the New Testament* (p. 237). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

² Stanley, C. F. (2005). *The Charles F. Stanley life principles Bible: New King James Version* (Jn 10:9–17). Nashville, TN: Nelson Bibles.

³ Borchert, G. L. (1996). *John 1–11* (Vol. 25A, p. 332). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.