



# *I Know My Own*

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who takes care of His sheep.

## **JOHN 10:7-14,25-30**

Home security is a huge business. We can install a security system ourselves or use professionals to install it, and we can self-monitor or use a company. We want to feel we are secure and the things we possess are secure. In Bible times, shepherds served as security systems that protected sheep. Jesus described Himself as the Good Shepherd, explaining that He protected His sheep.

**List products and systems people use to keep their homes secure. How would you rate the items you listed from most effective to least effective?**

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# UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

## JOHN 10:1-42

Jesus often used parables, metaphors, and similes to teach spiritual truths through stories ordinary people could understand. In chapter 10, Jesus used two important word pictures. He likened Himself to a gate and a Good Shepherd. Jesus was both the gate by which the sheep entered the sheepfold and the Good Shepherd who called them forth. No one can legitimately enter without going through the gate—Jesus.

Jesus condemned the religious leaders who tried to steal sheep. A thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy. In contrast, Jesus came to give eternal and abundant life. Unlike the thief who wants to harm the sheep, Jesus the Good Shepherd came to love, protect, and care for the sheep. The sheep represent those who know Jesus—believers. When the Good Shepherd calls His sheep, they follow Him because they know His voice. They are familiar with Him and know He loves them. Fed by His hand, they go where He leads.

Jesus the Good Shepherd loves His flock so much that He laid down His life for them. He was not a hired hand who fled when threatened by a predator. One might understand why the hireling would run away since the sheep are not his. The Good Shepherd does not seek to escape when an enemy approaches. He protects His flock even to the point of sacrificing His life.

The Pharisees interrupted Jesus's teaching and demanded He clearly state whether He was the Messiah. He had already made His identity clear, but they refused to believe. They became enraged when Jesus claimed to be one with the Father. They tried to kill Him, but He escaped and traveled to the Jordan River where John formerly baptized. People there remarked that even John never did works like Jesus, and many of them believed in Him.

**As you read John 10:7-14,25-30 in your Bible, highlight each time Jesus used the pronoun "I" when referring to Himself. How would you summarize what these uses teach about Jesus?**

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# EXPLORE THE TEXT

## THE GATE (JOHN 10:7-10)

<sup>7</sup> Jesus said again, “Truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep.

<sup>8</sup> All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep didn’t listen to them. <sup>9</sup> I am the gate. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture. <sup>10</sup> A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance.

### VERSES 7-10

*Truly I tell you* indicates that Jesus was about to teach an important truth. What follows is His explanation of the parable in verses 1-5. These verses contain the first of two ways Jesus identified His role in the parable: ***I am the gate for the sheep***. The imagery is of the shepherd who guards the sheep by sleeping in the opening in the sheepfold. Doing so, the shepherd literally placed himself between the flock and any predators or thieves.

Toward the end of the day, the shepherd would lead the sheep into a pen known as a sheepfold. A shepherd might construct a permanent sheepfold by stacking stones into a large, almost-enclosed area. He would put briars and brambles on the top of the stone wall. If a wolf or fox tried to get to the sheep, it would get entangled in the branches on top of the wall. Often the sheepfold backed up to a cave, which provided protection from inclement weather. A temporary sheepfold would be similar, except it would be made of just briars and brambles.

The opening in the sheepfold wall provided access into and out of the enclosure. A hired guard, a servant, or often a shepherd himself would sleep in the opening, serving as the sheepfold’s door. Shepherds led their flocks out of the sheepfolds in the morning. Each shepherd had a unique call; only his sheep would come if multiple flocks had shared the sheepfold.

Jesus depicted ***all who came before*** Him as ***thieves and robbers***. These were the religious leaders and false messiahs of His day. Describing them, Jesus used two words. *Thieves* is a translation of the Greek word *kleptes*, from which we get “kleptomaniac.” The term referred to those who typically stole in secret but were not violent.

Sheep and goats were often nabbed by thieves. *Robbers*, however, were bandits, often armed, who worked in groups to attack and steal from caravans and travelers—such as those mentioned in the story of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:30). The two men crucified with Jesus were robbers (Matt. 27:38). Jesus said His sheep **didn't listen to** or follow the false messiahs and religious leaders with self-focused agendas.

In verse 9, Jesus repeated, **I am the gate** (see also v. 7). The pronouncement is a reminder that Jesus was speaking allegorically. A sheepfold had only one entrance. In referring to Himself as *the gate*, Jesus was affirming that He is the only way to enter and to become part of the family or flock of God (see John 14:6).

Jesus repeated the **if anyone** formula found earlier (John 6:51; 7:17; 8:51), which included a promise of eternal life. Jesus also picked up on the Old Testament imagery of God's people enjoying blessings and protection (Ps. 121:7-8). To be saved, to **come in** and **go out**, and to **find pasture** highlighted the sheep's security from the thieves, robbers, and other predators.

As opposed to **a thief** who comes to **steal** a sheep to slaughter it for food, Jesus came to offer **life**—abundant and free. It is a life that gives believers meaning, purpose, and satisfaction for their days on earth. Additionally, this life is eternal; it extends beyond the grave. Only through Christ can we experience the overwhelming joy of what God intends our lives to be.

**How does Jesus serve as the gate into abundant life?**

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## **THE TRUE SHEPHERD (JOHN 10:11-14)**

**<sup>11</sup> “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup> The hired hand, since he is not the shepherd and doesn't own the sheep, leaves them and runs away when he sees a wolf coming. The wolf then snatches and scatters them. <sup>13</sup> This happens because he is a hired hand and doesn't care about the sheep. <sup>14</sup> “I am the good shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me,**

## VERSE 11

Whereas Jesus earlier identified Himself as the gate for the sheep, in these verses He referred to Himself as **the good shepherd**. The Greek word translated *good* describes someone noble or worthy. Jesus is not one of many good shepherds. He, *the good shepherd*, has no equal.

Jesus did the work a shepherd should do—caring for sheep, leading them, rescuing those that had gone astray, and making sure they were fed, well-watered, and protected. Those actions would be expected of an adequate shepherd. Jesus, though, was beyond adequate; He was the model of what an ideal shepherd should be. Jesus stated what set Him apart; He willingly **lays down his life for the sheep**. The phrase *lays down his life* appears uniquely in John's writings (John 10:11,17-18; 13:37-38; 15:13; 1 John 3:16). Jesus used the term to refer to His voluntary, sacrificial, and atoning death.

For a shepherd to give his life for his sheep was rare and certainly not expected. A shepherd might die by accident while attending his flock but certainly not intentionally. A shepherd needed to be alive to care for his flock. The word *for* in the phrase *for the sheep* is significant. It does not mean Jesus gave His life as an example or as a way to inspire His flock of followers. It means that when the sheep are facing mortal danger, He gets between the sheep and the predator. He fights and dies so the sheep don't have to.

### How do people recognize Jesus as the true Shepherd?

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## VERSES 12-14

The good shepherd stood in stark contrast to both “the worthless shepherd who deserts the flock” (Zech. 11:17) and the **hired hand** who **leaves** the sheep, **runs away** when threatened, and **doesn't care about the sheep**.

The intent of thieves, robbers, and wolves was to harm the animals. The *hired hand* was responsible for providing protection and security. By *hired hand*, Jesus was referring to Jewish religious leaders, each of whom was paid for his service. In the parable, the hired hand's concern was not for the sheep—but that he got paid.

Two things indicate the hired hand ***doesn't own the sheep***: he abandons the sheep when they are threatened and does not care about the sheep. Shepherds take great risks because they do care about their sheep. There is a bond between the animals and their owner. Verse 14 emphasizes that relationship. Jesus reiterated that He is the Good Shepherd who knows His own sheep and they ***know*** Him. The Greek word translated *know* doesn't mean to have information about something. Instead of knowing in the head, it carries the idea of knowing in the heart—of having a deeply personal relationship based on mutual trust and respect. Jesus likened this relationship to what He shares with the Father (v. 15). This type of heart connection is possible because the flock is His own sheep—again, in contrast to the hired hand.

Since Jesus loved us enough to lay down His life on the cross for us, He will withhold nothing good on behalf of His people. We need not fear the attacks of evil nor quake at harmful circumstances. Our Shepherd remains close at hand to provide, lead, care, and defend.

**How does the contrast between the hired hand and the Good Shepherd help us understand Jesus's purpose?**

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**BIBLE SKILL:** *Use other Scripture to help understand a Bible passage.*

On a separate sheet of paper, create a two-column list. In the first column include descriptions of the sheep and the Good Shepherd from John 10. In the second column, write aspects found in Psalm 23. What insights from Psalm 23 help you appreciate John 10?

## **THE SECURING SHEPHERD (JOHN 10:25-30)**

**<sup>25</sup> “I did tell you and you don't believe,” Jesus answered them. “The works that I do in my Father's name testify about me. <sup>26</sup> But you don't believe because you are not of my sheep. <sup>27</sup> My sheep hear**

**my voice, I know them, and they follow me.** <sup>28</sup> **I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.** <sup>29</sup> **My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.** <sup>30</sup> **I and the Father are one."**

### VERSES 25-27

Perplexed by what Jesus had been teaching, the Jews demanded He reveal plainly whether He was the Messiah (v. 24). They were looking for ammunition to use against Him.

Jesus Himself had told them on numerous occasions (John 5:39-47; 8:12-18,58). In fact, He had been telling who He was for over three years, yet they did not believe. Also, the **works** Jesus had been doing signified He was the Messiah. These works included the miracles Jesus performed and the messages He preached and taught. Everything Jesus had done pointed to the fact He was the Messiah. However, He was not the type of Messiah people were expecting—thus they didn't believe. Although the truth was before them, they rejected it (John 1:11).

When teaching about His sheep, Jesus explained the connection between the sheep and shepherd. In doing so, He stressed ownership, hearing, and obedience.

- Ownership: the shepherd "calls *his own sheep* by name . . . . when he has brought all *his own* outside, he goes ahead of them . . . . I know my own [sheep], and *my own* know me" (10:3,4,14, emphasis added).

- Hearing: "the sheep hear his [the shepherd's] voice . . . . they know his voice" (vv. 3,4).

- Obedience: "The sheep follow him" (v. 4).

The Jews who surrounded Jesus in the temple complex were **not of** His **sheep** (v. 26). They did not **hear** His voice and did not **follow** Him. Jesus did not know them, meaning He did not have that deep, heart-based relationship with them.

Verse 27 is a reminder of what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount: "On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name, drive out demons in your name, and do many miracles in your name?' Then I will announce to them, *I never knew you. Depart from me, you lawbreakers!*" (Matt 7:22-23, emphasis added). One cannot imagine hearing more dreadful or sadder words.

## VERSES 28-30

This text clearly and succinctly teaches the eternal security of the believer in Christ. Those who receive God's gift of eternal life will **never perish**. Death will not win. Believers pass from temporal life to eternal life. By its very definition, eternal life never ends.

The phrase at the beginning of verse 28, **I give them**, is a reminder that salvation is a gift (see Eph. 2:8). There is nothing we can do to earn salvation and nothing we might do to lose it. Therefore, the believer's salvation is secure.

Our faith is not based on our ability to hold onto God; at best, we are weak. It is based on the firm **hand** of Jesus and of the Father—both of whom hold us securely. To be held in the hand of Christ is to be held in the hand of God, since the two are one.

The Father **is greater than all** who would seek to harm us—all the thieves, robbers, religious hired hands, false prophets, deceivers, earthly rulers, forces of darkness, and even the devil himself. No one can snatch us out of God's hand; we are secure in Christ.

Jesus and **the Father are one**—one in intent, action, nature, and essence. In the task of holding securely onto the sheep, they are one. The Father and the Son embrace us with unrelenting power and love. As is often stated, God does the saving and God does the securing. Our role is to respond in faith.

**How does Jesus's promise of eternal life bring peace to a person's life?**

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### **KEY DOCTRINE:** *God's Purpose and Grace*

Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. (See Malachi 3:6; 2 Timothy 1:12.)

