

## Reading Plan for the Week of July 26, 2020

### Hey Students!

This week we will examine a couple of metaphors that Jesus used to describe Himself. Both metaphors, the gate and the good shepherd, speak to His role and character as the Savior sent by God for the salvation of human beings. Jesus is the only way to have a restored relationship with the Father, and our reconciliation required Jesus to lay His life down for us. Contrary to other teachers and leaders, Jesus will never leave or forsake His followers. He is the Good Shepherd who cares for His sheep and never stops loving them.

#### Day 1

##### Read John 10:1-6

Jesus painted a picture of two voices calling out to sheep: one is the good shepherd and the other is a sheep thief, and they are both calling the sheep to follow them. The sheep respond to and follow the voice of the shepherd but run away from the stranger's voice, and a good thing too since the thief wants to lead the sheep away to fleece them for personal gain.

Do you ever doubt if you really belong to the Good Shepherd—to Jesus? Sin, shame, and doubt can call out to you to convince you that maybe you don't really belong to Jesus. But Jesus assures us that all who are His sheep recognize His voice and follow His voice. They may not graze in a straight path behind the Shepherd, but they always return. Does the voice of Jesus through Scripture stir you to belief and repentance? If so, take heart because it means you belong to Him. If not, consider whose voice you are following and turn to the Good Shepherd who welcomes into His flock all who believe in Him.

**What are some voices surrounding us today trying to distract us from following Jesus?**

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#### Day 2

##### Read John 10:7-10

We often take doors for granted. What if there were no doors in the world? You wouldn't be able to enter or leave your home. You wouldn't be able to hop in a vehicle to go someplace, which you also wouldn't be able to enter. From another perspective, no doors would mean no sense of safety and security. A doorframe with no door invites anyone to enter, including thieves and murderers. We need doors.

Jesus said He alone is the gate, or door, to salvation and eternal life with God. Without this gate, there is no hope of being rescued from our sin and its consequence, no way of entering into God's holy presence.

Furthermore, without this gate, there would be no protection from those whose only goal is to do us harm, notably spiritual harm. But we do have this gate, and those who believe in Jesus ought to be grateful.

**What are some ways you will express your gratitude for Jesus as the gate to salvation?**

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### Day 3

#### Read John 10:11-13

In this passage, Jesus expanded upon His metaphor of a shepherd at the beginning of the chapter, and He did so, in part, by way of contrast. Previously, Jesus described the bad actors in the scenario as “strangers” and as “thieves and robbers” who climbed the walls of the sheepfold instead of entering by the gate (vv. 1-5). Here He adds “hired hand” and “wolf.” The enemies of the sheep come from without and within, unknown and known. They may be among us, but they are not of us (1 John 2:18-19). They are characterized by selfishness, deception, and a desire to hurt and create division.

By contrast, the Good Shepherd lays His life down for His sheep. He won’t abandon them but will defend them with His life. His sheep know Him intimately, and where enemies seek to harm and scatter, Jesus binds up and heals. He cares about His sheep; He cares about you.

**How does the Good Shepherd’s care for His sheep address the pain and struggles you are currently facing?**

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### Day 4

#### Read John 10:14-18

The Bible says it is appointed for human beings to die once and then face judgment for their thoughts, words, and actions in life (Heb. 9:27). All of us are going to die. The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23); we’ve earned this. And once we have died, we are going to stay dead (until, of course, Jesus returns and brings the promised resurrection). No amount of effort from our dead selves will start our hearts beating, our lungs breathing, or our bodies moving.

But Jesus, as fully human as we are, is unique, for He is also fully divine. By the command of His Father, the Son of God came to earth as a human being for the purpose of laying down His life to save us from eternal death and the judgment of hell for our sin. And He also has the right and the power to take His life up again in His resurrection, because He died not for His own sin but for ours. He died and was raised so we too might be raised in the newness of eternal life.

**What are some ways you will show your love and honor for the One who laid His life down and took it up again to save you?**

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### Day 5

#### Read John 10:19-21

The people in this passage came to a crossroads as they debated over who Jesus is. They were split over whether Jesus was demon-possessed or divinely powerful. In his book *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis famously said that when you encounter Jesus, you have one of three conclusions to make: Jesus is either a liar, a lunatic, or He is Lord. [See C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, (New York: Touchstone, 1980), 55-56.] If He is a madman or a liar, then you don’t take seriously anything He says. But if He actually is who He says He is, then you must take everything He says seriously. Lewis’s point was that you cannot encounter Jesus and remain ambivalent toward Him; Jesus demands a response from you, and failing to respond is in itself a response to discount Jesus.

The blind man whom Jesus had healed made his choice: Jesus is Lord. To make this response means we must submit ourselves to Him and His authority. He is the Good Shepherd, after all.

**What parts of your life require your repentance and submission to the Good Shepherd?**

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