

BRMC Small Group Study: John 10:1-21

Leaders Guide

Please note that the suggestions below are not model answers but to help guide your study. Feel free to adapt the questions for your group.

Leader's Notes:

Context:

We are now at the end of the narrative at the Feast of the Tabernacles (John 7:1-10:21). At the end of John 9, we saw that the Pharisees excommunicated the man born blind and how he worshipped Jesus. We can assume that the events of John 9 lead directly to the first half of John 10 as Jesus is still addressing the Pharisees or Jews (which can be translated to 'Jewish leaders'). John 10:21 also makes reference to the healing of the man born blind.

Introduction:

This first half of John 10 presents us with 2 of the 7 'I am' statements in the Gospel of John: "I am the good shepherd", and "I am the door (or gate)". Today we shall study these statements to find out their meanings.

Lesson Objectives:

- Learn how Jesus is both the good shepherd and the door.
- Study how we can internalise this and reflect this in our lives.

Observation

1. In this passage Jesus shares a parable and explains it. Who and what are the characters Jesus mentions within the parable?

- *Sheep.*
- *Thief and robber.*
- *Shepherd of the sheep.*
- *Gatekeeper.*
- *The door.*
- *Hired hand.*
- *Wolf.*

2. Imagine you are Jesus. Retell the passage in a modern context as creatively as you can.

- *This is a fun activity for you to attempt with your small group.*

Interpretation

3. What is the setting of this parable?

- *Answer taken from John: An Introduction and Commentary, vol. 4, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries by Colin G. Kruse:*
 - *To appreciate this parable, it is important to understand its setting in a small Jewish village. Most village families owned a few sheep. The houses of the villagers had small walled courtyards where the sheep were kept. Because each family had only a few sheep, a shepherd for each household was not justified, so several households would have one shepherd to look after their sheep. Often the shepherding was done by a son (or two daughters) from one of*

these families. If such a person was not available a stranger/hireling was employed. Early each morning the sheep would be taken out to graze in the open country. The shepherd moved from house to house, and because he was known to the doorkeepers they opened their courtyard doors to allow him to call out the sheep. The sheep knew his voice and eagerly followed him into the open country to feed. The walls of the courtyards could be up to six and a half feet high. One who was not the shepherd, who had ulterior motives, would have to climb over the walls because the doorkeeper would not admit him, and, of course, the sheep would not recognize his call and would flee from him.

- *Compared to western shepherds, the shepherds in the ancient Middle East led their sheep from the front instead of driving them from behind. This requires an immense amount of trust between the sheep and shepherd. The sheep must be able to recognise the unique calls of the shepherd, and the shepherd must trust that his sheep would hear him and follow.*
- *Jesus is the good shepherd and we have the ability to truly know and recognise his voice. He will definitely lead us to safety and eternal life.*

4. How is Jesus both the good shepherd who enters by the door and also the door of the sheep (John 10:2 and John 10:7)?

- *After the shepherd has taken out the sheep from the family courtyards, he will then lead them to graze. This can sometimes take several days. Out in the field, there are structures erected for the sheep to be sheltered overnight. However, due to it being basic walled structures, the shepherd himself must lie at the doorway to act as the door to prevent thieves and predators from entering. In this context, the shepherd is both shepherd and door. The Jewish listeners could probably understand this due to the context of their time.*
- *Jesus is both shepherd and door. There is only one way to eternal life and he guards it. He ensures that only those who are truly his sheep can enter*

5. Read Ezekiel 34:1-24. How does Ezekiel 34 explain Jesus' words in John 10:1-21?

- *The Ezekiel passage talks about the shepherds or leaders of Israel were corrupt and sinful. They did not care for the sheep or people of Israel and the world but instead were only concerned for themselves.*
- *Jesus was alluding that the Jewish leaders were these very same shepherds of Israel and have failed their duty.*
- *Instead, Jesus himself is the shepherd who will seek out his sheep and rescue them. Jesus was not just sharing a simple parable to annoy the Jews. He was alluding to ancient Scripture and showing how he is the fulfilment of that Scripture. He is the David prophesied in Ezekiel 34:24.*

6. Who are the other sheep not of the fold (John 10:16) and why are they important?

- *These refer to the gentiles who were also seen as sheep by Jesus. At this point, the Jews only thought the Messiah was for them and no one else. However, Jesus had to explain that he also came for those outside the fold.*
- *By saying that there would be one eventual flock (John 10:16), Jesus was implying that all, whether Jew or Gentile, would be led to and welcomed through the door by him.*

7. What did Jesus mean when he said that he had the authority to lay down his life and take it up again (John 10:17-18)?

- *Jesus was saying from the beginning that he is not a victim of circumstance. He dictates the time of his death and resurrection. Only God can decide death and resurrection. Jesus once again points to his divinity as God.*

Application

8. How have you heard and recognised the voice of Jesus, the good shepherd?

9. A bad shepherd exploits his sheep for his own gain. A good shepherd works for the benefit of the sheep. How can you follow the example of Jesus to be a good shepherd to those around you?