

## Study Guide for the Central Church of Christ 11-25-18

To Adult Teachers:

November 25 we will study John 10:1-15. Discussion questions are:

1. What are the times in your life when the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm has come to your mind?
2. Agree/disagree: *“The reason so many people love the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm is sentimentality. They are not about to admit they need Jesus for everything they think, say, and do in life. They are not confessing their own helplessness.”*
3. Did you this morning get an enhanced understanding of Jesus as your shepherd? If so, how?
4. What is the essential difference in seeing Jesus as a consultant rather than as a shepherd?
5. Look at the life and death of Stephen in Acts 6-7. How did the shepherding of Jesus affect his life?  
6:5  
6:8  
7:51  
7:59  
7:60
6. Do you think this suggestion for experiencing the shepherding of Jesus would work:  
*Make a list of the 4 or 5 temptations you are likely to face during the day and where and when they usually occur. Then when that moment in the day or that place in your routine comes, cry out to him, “Lord, I’m walking into the dark valley. Lead me not into temptation but deliver me from evil.”*
7. What is Jesus’ point about the nature of his shepherding in vs. 12?
8. How should the fact that Jesus knows his sheep (14) yet still lays down his life for them (15) affect you?
9. How does it make you feel to realize Jesus knows your name? (vs. 3)

### Sermon: The Good Shepherd John 10:1-15

As Jesus spoke those words he surely knew that his audience was familiar with Psalm 23, *“The Lord is my shepherd....”* We have no dream any closer to the surface of our deepest needs than that of the good shepherd who takes us to calm places, who restores our hearts when they ache more than any human knows, who offers us a refuge of safety when danger is all around us, who can set a dinner table and provide a feast for us in the midst of a full force attack from our enemies. The idea of a source of rest touches such a common nerve. Tragically some of you are seeking rest in all the wrong places. You seek a shepherd from pills or alcohol or the pursuit of pleasure. And all of you know at some level in your thinking that those are poor shepherds. They do not provide in any lasting way what they promise. Not so with the great shepherd. When the Lord is your shepherd, you will not want! That’s the difference in the true shepherd and false shepherds. The true shepherd makes good on his promise.

Notice what Jesus does. Knowing his audience has memorized and quoted and sung Psalm 23 all their lives he grasps all the hope that Psalm offers and announces with great boldness, *“I am the good shepherd.”* What I hope you will take with you today is an enhanced understanding of Jesus as a shepherd. To understand God you must understand the “shepherdness” of Jesus. So this morning let’s look at what Jesus is to the sheep and what Jesus does for the sheep.

### What Jesus is to the sheep

If Jesus is a shepherd to us, what do we have to do to be his sheep? If Jesus is your shepherd then he has to be everything to you. It’s not a compliment to be considered a sheep. Nobody ever heard of a wild sheep. There are wild horses, wild dogs and wild cats but no wild sheep. Sheep are too dim-witted and helpless to be wild. If

you give a normal animal its freedom what does it do? It sings, “born free, as free as the wind blows,” then it runs off to live in the wild without any need for human care. If you set a sheep loose it says, “Where am I? Who’s going to fix supper?” The poor sheep will eat a poison plant and die or get attacked by some sheep-eating wild creature or it will fall in the river and drown or it may stumble and find itself lying on its back like a turtle, unable to turn over.

So who is a shepherd? He is someone who lives with the sheep. A shepherd never goes home. His home is with the sheep. He lives with the sheep. He sleeps with the sheep. He does everything for the sheep. He is the protector and provider and physician for the sheep. He is the sheep’s leader and guide and owner. The shepherd is everything to the sheep.

I want to encourage you this morning to let your humility have full reign and admit you are a sheep. Let’s start with our feelings about the 23’rd Psalm. The reason so many people love the 23’rd Psalm is sentimentality. They are not about to admit they need Jesus for everything they think, say and do in life. They are not going to confess their own helplessness. They are usually just saying, “When somebody dies it makes me feel better to hear the familiar words of the 23’rd Psalm.” Put on your sheep’s ears for a moment and listen to the words of Jesus in John 15, “*Without me you can do nothing.*” Do you believe that? To say that you are a sheep is to say that you admit that without the shepherd you can do nothing.

Can I challenge you with a harsh truth this morning? You don’t like being a sheep. You think that basically you are a pretty good person, capable of making pretty good choices, except in extreme circumstances when you need a little help. You don’t want a shepherd, you want a consultant. You want someone to call in for advice from time to time. A shepherd isn’t a consultant.

If we could go back in time 10 years and have a prophet sit with you and say, “Here are the dumb things you will do in the next 10 years. Here are the sins you will commit. Here are the times you will turn your back on God.”, you would be angry with him and not believe him. But you did it over the last 10 years didn’t you? You goofed up spiritually many times. Admit it – you need a shepherd!

But admitting it is not enough. I admit I need to exercise but that’s not enough is it? I have to put into practice what I admit. If you admit you need a shepherd you have to start following his direction. How do you live moment by moment as if God is a shepherd? You have to obey him in every area of your life. You have to quit compartmentalizing your life into your business life, your recreational life, your home life and your spiritual life. You have to quit saying, “If I had to walk a tightrope across the Grand Canyon, I’d pray before I started to walk.” and start saying, “With every step I take, Lord, I need your help. I can’t walk from here to the other side of the auditorium without your help. I need you. Oh, I need you. Every hour I need you.”

Sometime look at the last day of Elijah’s life in II Kings. You know what he did? He went to Bethel and preached then he went to Jericho and preached. He did the same thing on the last day of his life he did every day of his life. Here was a man whose eyes were constantly on the shepherd. Whether he ever quoted the 23’rd Psalm or not, the Lord really was his shepherd because he watched and followed the shepherd 24/7.

Look at a sheep like Stephen. We know essentially 3 things about his life. When the church was quarreling over something as menial as food distribution he took on the food distribution ministry. When great wonders and miracles were needed he used his God-given power to perform wonders and miracles. When they stoned him he responded by looking at the great shepherd, talking to the great shepherd and dying with the same forgiving spirit with which the great shepherd died. That’s what it means for the Lord to be your shepherd. It means you follow him if he calls you to do a menial task like serving food or a magnificent task like performing great wonders and miracles or a horrible task like being stoned to death with forgiveness in your heart as the stones fly toward your head.

Several years ago Bob Hester and I were squirrel hunting. As you know I don't have any sense of direction so as we wandered around in the woods I just kept my eye on Bob. It started getting very cloudy and before long you couldn't see the sun, just clouds. Bob got this look of mild panic on his face and said, "I can't tell where the sun is." I kept the same look on my face I always have and said, "So?" He said, "So we are lost." Then he paused and said, "You feel this way all the time don't you?" I said, "Yes, why else would I want you to go squirrel hunting with me?" I don't go into the deep woods without a shepherd. We must learn to never go anywhere without the Lord, the great shepherd leading us. Don't go to the grocery store, the movies, the library, without your shepherd leading you. Don't go on a date, buy a house, or take your trash out to the curb without your shepherd leading you.

If you want to get better at following the great shepherd try this – make a list of the 4 or 5 temptations you are likely to face during the day and where and when they usually occur. When do you start losing your patience? When will you have a hard time loving people? When does lust typically strike? What part of your day leads you to envy? Then when that moment in the day or that place in your routine comes, cry out to him, "Lord, I'm walking into the dark valley. Lead me not into temptation but deliver me from evil."

Notice something Jesus says in vs. 12, "*The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep.*" He is saying, "There are basically 2 kinds of shepherds: those who are just hired to do a job and those who actually own the sheep." He is the kind of shepherd who owns the sheep. His sheep are his pride and joy and wealth. His sheep are his glory. Paul describes the glory God takes in his sheep in these words, "*...to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*" Do you get it? You are the pride and joy of God himself. He is not going ask of you anything that isn't good for you. He isn't out to make your life more difficult. He wants the best for you. You are his pride and joy. You are the sheep of his pasture.

#### What does Jesus do for the sheep?

Listen to Jesus' description of himself as a shepherd: "*I lay down my life knowingly.*" "*I know my sheep.*" If he is your shepherd he knows you completely. You can do nothing to surprise him. I do not know of a more comforting thought in all the Bible than these two back to back expressions in John 10:14-15, "*I know my sheep...and I lay down my life for the sheep.*" He knows and still he lays his life down for me! We could all turn to the person next to us or behind us or in front of us and truthfully say, "You don't know me. I have you fooled. I sin in ways you will never find out about." But the great shepherd knows and still he lays down his life for you. Jesus asked a question on the cross to which you must hear the answer. The question was, "*My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" The answer is, "For the sheep!"

Let me ask you a question. If he knows everything about you and still lays down his life for you, when are you going to relax and find your rest in him? When are you going to quit running from him as if he wanted to do you harm? When are you going to just lie down in the green pastures of his grace and give up running from him?

Vs. 3 says the good shepherd calls his sheep by name. Have you had the experience of meeting someone very important? You only have that one brief encounter with them and then some time later you run into them again and they remember your name? You come away from that kind of encounter thinking, "Wow, as important and busy as that person is they remembered my name! I must have worth in their eyes." As we sing would you hear Jesus calling your name? He not only knows your name, he knows your shame, and still he loves you. Hear him calling you to quit running and lie down in the green pastures of his grace. Lie down next to the still waters of his tender care.