

*The Rhino, The Bison, & The Lamb*  
*The Lamb*  
Troy Knight

**TALK IT OVER**

Key Scripture:

**Matthew 18:2-4 (NLT)**

*2 Jesus called a little child to him and put the child among them. 3 Then he said, "I tell you the truth, unless you turn from your sins and become like little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven. 4 So anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

**Psalms 23 (NLT)**

*1 The Lord is my shepherd;  
I have all that I need.  
2 He lets me rest in green meadows;  
he leads me beside peaceful streams.  
3 He renews my strength.  
He guides me along right paths,  
bringing honor to his name.  
4 Even when I walk  
through the darkest valley,  
I will not be afraid,  
for you are close beside me.  
Your rod and your staff  
protect and comfort me.  
5 You prepare a feast for me  
in the presence of my enemies.  
You honor me by anointing my head with oil.  
My cup overflows with blessings.  
6 Surely your goodness and unfailing love  
will pursue me  
all the days of my life,  
and I will live in the house of the Lord  
forever.*

**Deuteronomy 10:12-13 (NLT)**

*12 "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? He requires only that you fear the Lord your God, and live in a way that pleases him, and love him and serve him with all your heart and soul. 13 And you must always obey the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good.*

**1 Peter 2:25 (NLT)**

*25 Once you were like sheep who wandered away. But now you have turned to your Shepherd, the Guardian of your souls.*

Start **talking**. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- Let's kick off the SG semester with this question. What spiritual goal do you have for this Fall? How can your small group help you accomplish that goal?

Start **thinking**. Ask a question to get your group thinking.

- **Read Matthew 18:2-4.** Why is faith like a child a prerequisite for entering the Kingdom of Heaven? Who will be great in the Kingdom of Heaven?
- **Read Psalm 23**, which says we are sheep and God is our Shepherd. What does the Shepherd provide for the sheep in this Psalm?
- **Read Deuteronomy 10:12-13.** God gave us intelligence and wisdom, so why do we often ignore the words "for your own good?"

Start **sharing**. Choose a question to create openness.

- Last week we talked about the Rhino and how he represents a forward type of faith. This week the lamb represents a dependent faith. Which animal do you relate to more?
- Keller said sheep are anxious, dumb and prone to wander. Can you think of a time this week when you acted like a lamb?
- **Read 1 Peter 2:25.** Have you noticed a tendency in your life to wander away from God, your church family, and your spiritual disciplines that help you grow? How does the "Guardian of your soul" protect you from these tendencies to drift? How can our small group help you in this regard?
- **Read John 10:1-5.** Do you recognize Jesus' voice? Why do you follow him as your Shepherd and not others?
- Discuss this statement: "Jesus is the only Shepherd who became a lamb."

Start **doing**. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- If faith is a gift of God in addition to your own exercise, what could you do to posture yourself to receive a greater portion of faith from God?

Start **praying**. Be bold and pray with power.

- Pray that the members of your small group connect meaningfully and experience God working in your lives in this semester. Pray that you are able to recognize and deepen your dependence on Him in the exercise of your faith.

Start **digging**. For further study.

- Read the 2nd page and discuss it.

**Question: "What did Jesus mean when He said, "I am the good Shepherd?""**

**Answer:** "I am the good Shepherd" (John 10:11) is the fourth of seven "I am" declarations of Jesus recorded only in John's gospel. These "I am" proclamations point to His unique divine identity and purpose. Immediately after declaring that He is "the door" in John 10:7, here Jesus declares "I am the good shepherd." He describes Himself as not only "the shepherd," but the "good shepherd." What does this mean?

It should be understood that Jesus is "the" good shepherd, not simply "a" good shepherd, as others may be, but He is unique in character (Psalm 23; Zechariah 13:7; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 2:25; 1 Peter 5:4). The Greek word *kalos* translated "good" describes that which is noble, wholesome, good, and beautiful, in contrast with that which is wicked, mean, foul and unlovely. It signifies not only that which is good inwardly—character—but also that which is attractive outwardly. It is an innate goodness. Therefore, in using the phrase "the good shepherd," Jesus is referencing His inherent goodness, His righteousness, and His beauty. As shepherd of the sheep, He is the one who protects, guides, and nurtures His flock.

As He did in declaring that He is "the door of the sheep" in John 10:7, Jesus is making a contrast between Himself and the religious leaders, the Pharisees (John 10:12-13). He compares them to a "hireling" or "hired hand" who don't really care about the sheep. In John 10:9, Jesus speaks of thieves and robbers who sought to enter the sheepfold stealthily. In that passage the Jewish leaders (Pharisees) were contrasted with Christ who is the Door. Here, in John 10:12, the hireling is contrasted with the true or faithful shepherd who willingly gives up his life for the sheep. He who is a "hireling" works for wages, which are his main consideration. His concern is not for the sheep but for himself. Interestingly enough, the shepherds of ancient times were not usually the owners of the flock. Nevertheless, they were expected to exercise the same care and concern the owners would. This was characteristic of a true shepherd. However, some of the hirelings thought only of themselves. As a result, when a wolf appeared—the most common threat to sheep in that day—the hireling abandoned the flock and fled, leaving the sheep to be scattered or killed (John 10:12-13).

First, to better understand the purpose of a shepherd during the ancient times of Jesus, it is helpful to realize that sheep are utterly defenseless and totally dependent upon the Shepherd. Sheep are always subject to danger and must always be under the watchful eye of the shepherd as they graze. Rushing walls of water down the valleys from sudden heavy rainfalls may sweep them away, robbers may steal them, and wolves may attack the flock. David tells how he killed a lion and a bear while defending his father's flock as a shepherd boy (1 Samuel 17:36). Driving snow in the winter, blinding dust and burning sands in summer, long lonely hours each day, all these the shepherd patiently endures for the welfare of the flock. In fact, shepherds were frequently subjected to grave danger, sometimes even giving their lives to protect their sheep.

Likewise, Jesus gave His life on the cross as "The Good Shepherd" for his own. He who would save others, though He had the power, did not choose to save Himself. "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). Through His willing sacrifice the Lord made salvation possible for all who come to Him in faith. In proclaiming that He is the good shepherd, Jesus speaks of "laying down" His life for His sheep (John 10:15, 17-18).

Jesus' death was divinely appointed. It is only through Him that we receive salvation. "I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own" (John 10:14). Furthermore, Jesus makes it clear that it wasn't just for the Jews that he laid down His life, but also for the "other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd" (John 10:16). The "other sheep" clearly refers to the Gentiles. As a result, Jesus is the Good Shepherd over all, both Jew and Gentile, who come to believe upon Him (John 3:16).