

True North  
I am the Good Shepherd  
Clay Weed

TALK IT OVER

Key Scripture:

**Exodus 3:14 (NLT)**

*14 God replied to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. Say this to the people of Israel: I AM has sent me to you."*

**John 10:1–10 (NLT)**

*"I tell you the truth, anyone who sneaks over the wall of a sheepfold, rather than going through the gate, must surely be a thief and a robber! 2 But the one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice. 5 They won't follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don't know his voice." 6 Those who heard Jesus use this illustration didn't understand what he meant, 7 so he explained it to them: "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who came before me were thieves and robbers. But the true sheep did not listen to them. 9 Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures. 10 The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life."*

**Leviticus 17:11 (NLT)**

**John 10:11–18 (NLT)**

**1 Samuel 17:32-37 (NLT)**

**Psalms 23:1-6 (NLT)**

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

- Share a time when you felt lost or uncertain about a decision in your life. How did you navigate that situation, and how did your faith play a role?

Start **sharing**. These questions are to help get your group thinking and to create openness.

- What was the significance of God's name that He gave to Moses in **Exodus 3:14**?
- **Read John 10:1–10**. What did Jesus mean when He said, "I AM the Gate for the sheep?" How does this claim impact your life?
- How can we recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd in our lives? What are some common "thieves" that try to steal our attention and loyalty away from Jesus?
- Clay mentioned 4 barriers to hearing the Shepherd's voice: unconfessed sin, pride, bitterness/resentment, and not setting aside time. With which one do you struggle most? Would you add anything to the list?
- Discuss the significance of the blood sacrifice and Christ's role as the Good Shepherd as it pertains to that sacrifice. Read **Lev 17:11** and **John 10:11-18** for reference.
- Clay said "Shepherds smell like sheep." Referencing **Matt 9:10-12**, how can we "smell like sheep"? How can we influence the culture without being influenced by the culture?
- **Read Psalm 23** together. How does it illustrate the relationship between the Good Shepherd and His sheep? What aspects of this passage resonate with you personally?

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

- Be intentional and set aside a specific time this week to listen for the voice of the Good Shepherd.

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

- Give thanks to Jesus for being our Good Shepherd and for sacrificing Himself to deliver us. Praise Him for allowing us to know Him and for giving us life. Ask for His help in discerning His voice and following Him.

**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).