



Movement One – Introduction

In a rural school in Middle Tennessee, a second-grade teacher asked her students, “If there are nine sheep in a pen and one jumps out, how many are left?”

“Eight!” the class responded.

But one little boy raised his hand and said, “None of them are left.”

The teacher laughed. “You don’t understand arithmetic.”

The little boy said, “No, teacher. You don’t understand sheep.”

The little boy knew something that shepherds know about their flock: sheep are followers, and they can easily be led astray. Sheep need the shepherd.

Today, I want to encourage you to listen to what God would want us to hear: humans too, are followers, and we can be easily led astray. We need the Good Shepherd and the flock. Without leadership from God in a community of faith, we are missing the direction and abundant blessings that God wants for our lives.

In our culture that emphasizes independence and individuality, the way of Jesus stands out as very different. The way of the Jesus follower is not living life on our own, however we choose. Jesus didn’t call us to follow Him in private. As sheep, we depend on the Good Shepherd to guide, protect, and speak to us.

[Teacher Note: I used this personal story as a setup to the message. You can share your own or borrow mine and share it in the third person.]

Recently I met a young man with metastatic cancer who asked me, “How do I hear from God?” You see, he realized his time was short, and his serious diagnosis made him want to prioritize the things in his life that mattered most. It’s a reminder for us that we don’t have to wait until something really bad happens in our lives to get things in order, nor should we.

Today is a gift, and we are not promised tomorrow. Today's message hopes to answer one question: "How do I hear from Jesus?", "How do I hear from Jesus?"

Movement Two – Scriptural Deep Dive

Today, we are going to read John 10, and as we do let me set the stage. The disciples of Jesus had been following Him for some time. They were becoming accustomed to His teaching and miracles. In John 9, Jesus healed a blind man and talked to His disciples and the Pharisees about truly seeing the things of the Spirit. In John 10, Jesus talked a great deal about sheep and His role as the Good Shepherd. In **verse 9**, Jesus said, **"I am the door,"** where He described Himself as the place of entry and protection for the sheep. In **verse 14**, Jesus defined His role, saying, **"I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me."**

Many of the disciples would have grown up around shepherds and sheep, so these words would have been very familiar to them and their culture.

Today, I want us to focus on one verse. Let's look at **John 10:27 – "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."** Let's break down this verse together.

My – My implies relationship and connection. It also means that there are other sheep in other pastures who are not Jesus' sheep. Why? These other sheep lack connection and relationship. My means not just that you have claimed Jesus as your shepherd but also that Jesus has claimed you as His sheep. You are His. He is responsible for you in the same way a shepherd is responsible for the sheep he tends. Being "my" means you belong to Jesus, and you are in His flock.

Sheep – It has been said that sheep are not very smart, some even call them dumb animals. Let's think of them as naturally skeptical, easily scared, easily motivated by food, herd animals, and followers. When Jesus calls His disciple-followers "sheep," He wasn't insulting them, telling them that they were dumb. Although, while there is some truth to that fact that sheep aren't as smart as the shepherd, they have very limited understanding or beyond what's in front of them, which is also true in that

we humans have limited knowledge and wisdom compared to an all-knowing Shepherd Jesus. Sheep need the Shepherd for protection, food, and guidance.

A group of seminary professors spent some time with a shepherd to better understand what Jesus meant in this passage of Scripture. These biblical scholars asked the shepherd to describe what it's like to have sheep. The shepherd told of a time when one sheep tripped over its own feet and the whole rest of the flock spent the day jumping over the same spot where he had tripped because they believed there was something there they might fall over; even though there was nothing on the ground to trip over.¹ My bet is that many of your friends and students in your school are a lot like these sheep: they (and we all) do things because other people are doing things without really knowing why we are doing those things. We are a lot like sheep.

Hear my voice – hearing and listening are two different things. Hearing means that the ears of the sheep are open and ready. Sheep hear sounds of their flock, sounds of danger, and the sounds of their shepherd. It is specifically this hearing of Jesus' voice that He distinguishes as the responsibility of His sheep. Jesus' sheep hear His voice because they are near, and they are ready to hear His voice.

And I know them – Just like being called “my sheep” by Jesus, knowing His sheep shows a deep connection and intimacy. The shepherd knows the needs of the sheep, and the shepherd knows the weaknesses and strengths of the sheep. There is comfort in being known by the shepherd. There is safety and care implied by Jesus when He said He knows His sheep. Jesus knows the thoughts, words, actions, motivations, hopes, dreams, and fears of the sheep. This means He knows you.

And they follow me – The sheep follow the Shepherd Jesus. It's one thing to listen to the voice of the shepherd, it's another to be known by the shepherd, but we also must follow the shepherd. A shepherd uses a variety of training and tools over time to guide and discipline the sheep into

¹ <https://www.dailyamerican.com/story/opinion/columns/2022/04/11/nancy-stoppe-column-about-the-voice-of-the-shepherd/65348836007/>

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