

A Shepherd to Guide Me

Pastor Randy projects this study to be a four-week study to start out 2016. (Although this series can be studied at any time) The question to ask ourselves for this year is what are we full of? We can be full of many things both good and bad, but this year let's set a goal of being full of his Spirit and full of his Word.

It's important to realize that this doesn't happen in one-moment or experience, but daily deposits, small things that add up to something big.

Most of us have come to realize that our lives consist of small responses to circumstances in our life. Our *finances* are a good example of little decisions that add up either negatively or positively shape that part of our lives. We don't become *physically* healthy with one big workout. As well with *relationships*, small words or acts of kindness or criticism make or break a relationship, its accumulative.

It is no different with his Spirit and his Word. We thank God for those special times and encounters but in reality it's the ongoing things that bring real change and transformation.

Pastor Randy said that the number one question he gets in his role is: "how can I hear God's voice"? In John's Gospel Jesus says over 7 times "this is what I'm like" or "this is who I am". This ties back to the Old Testament when God showed himself and sent Moses to Egypt identifying himself as "I am". A derivative of "I am" is the title we are use, "Yahweh". God is the unchanging force in the universe. Everything in our lives will change, not always for the bad it's just the nature of things. But God is the one constant in all of creation and in our lives.

So Jesus is literally saying: "I am the Shepherd", Psalm 23 "The Lord (Yahweh) is my Shepherd..." He is the unchanging.

Text

"Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. 2 The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him

ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." 6 Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them. 7 Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. 9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. 11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. 13 The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. 14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. 17 The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father...my sheep listen to my voice, I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:1-18; 27)

The word "Sheep" is the most mentioned animal in scripture; they are referenced over 200 times. Since we are referred to as sheep it would seem wise to understand as much as possible about sheep:

- **Sheep are directionally challenged**

Sheep get lost and they follow the cravings of their appetites.

"We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6)

- **Sheep are defenseless**

Sheep are easily frightened and fearful. You don't see signs saying, "beware of the sheep" or reports of packs of sheep causing violent havoc. They are not born with claws or sharp teeth to defend themselves.

- **Sheep lack overall intelligence**

Enough said this is painful!

- **Sheep are naturally dirty**



Jesus calls us sheep; if we're going to survive we need a Shepherd.

"Then came the Festival of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, 23 and Jesus was in the temple courts walking in Solomon's Colonnade." **(John 10:22)**

The [Feast of Dedication](#), (today Hanukkah), once also called "Feast of the Maccabees," was a Jewish festival observed for eight days. It was instituted in the year 165 B.C. by [Judas Maccabeus](#), his brothers, and the elders of the congregation of Israel in commemoration of the re-consecration of the [Jewish Temple in Jerusalem](#), and especially of the altar of burnt offerings, after they had been desecrated during the persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes (168 BC).

The Jewish people of that time wanted another "Judas Maccabeus" but Jesus said, "*I am the Good Shepherd*".

1) **The Good Shepherd Cares about people**

"The word of the Lord came to me: 2 "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? 3 You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. 4 You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally." **(Ezekiel 34:1-4)**

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I lack for nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters refreshes my soul." **(Psalm 23:1-2)**

23:1-2)

“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” (Matthew 9:36)

2) **The Good Shepherd seeks those who are lost**

*“For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. 12 As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness... 15 I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign Lord. 16 I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.”
(Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-16)*

3) **The Good Shepherd communicates with the flock.**

“The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.” (:3)

“My sheep listen to my voice, I know them, and they follow me.” (:27)

“We serve a God who speaks to the human heart”

4) **The Sheep/Shepherd relationship speaks of a radical dependence.**

*“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come **a ruler** who will **shepherd my people Israel.**”
(Matthew 2:6)*

“If you want to hear from God, submit to God”

There are many tests that help us identify our basic personalities; one popular one is the Lion, Beaver, Otter and Retriever. Notwithstanding this before God we are sheep!

Discussion Questions

- 1) In our introduction, we asked the question “what are you full of”? We can be filled with bad things, hate, envy jealousy or we can be full of his *Spirit* and his *Word*. Please discuss two things, what does this mean on a practical level to you and the fact that this doesn't happen

can be mixed with sad things, hate, envy, jealousy or we can be full of his *Spirit* and his *Word*. Please discuss two things, what does this mean on a practical level to you and the fact that this doesn't happen in one big event but over time in small segments.

- 2) In John's Gospel there is no doubt of the divinity of Jesus as he used the O.T. title for God, "I am" to describe himself. But he will use this title in our study of the Good Shepherd to show us something very important. He identified himself by saying "I am the Good Shepherd pointing to the fact that "God is the unchanging force in the universe". Please discuss the fact and implications that everything in our lives will change but he is the unchanging one.
- 3) Okay it's a little painful that Jesus calls us sheep and as we study about sheep we realize how vulnerable we are. Please discuss each of the following categories:
 - a) "Sheep are directionally challenged"
 - b) "Sheep are defenseless "
 - c) "Sheep lack overall intelligence"
 - d) "Sheep are naturally dirty"
- 4) Lastly please review the scripture given for each of the following and discuss:
 - a) The Good Shepherd Cares about people
 - b) The Good Shepherd seeks those who are lost
 - c) The Good Shepherd communicates with the flock
 - d) The Sheep/Shepherd relationship speaks of a radical dependence