

## Week Four: Who Is Jesus and What Does He Offer?

### Participant Sheet

#### Session 4: Week of February 26, 2023

#### I Am The Good Shepherd

#### *John 10:11-18*

#### Brewster Baptist Church, Brewster MA

#### Connecting

In *John 10:16* Jesus says, “*I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice.*”

If you have a pet, how does that animal respond to the sound of your voice?

#### Biblical Background - Shepherd Imagery in the Bible

*(Read as a group, the Bible references don't have to be read now, they're for additional reading for those who wish)*

In numerous Bible passages the customs of shepherds are used to illustrate spiritual principles; for example, sheep without a shepherd are like those who have strayed from God (*Matthew 9:36; Mark 6:34*), and shepherds are compared to spiritual overseers (*Numbers 27:16-17; Ecclesiastes 12:11; John 21:15-17*). The most extended images of the shepherd are found in ***Psalms 23 and Ezekiel 34***; both passages portray God as one who protects and cares for a helpless flock. In addition to these two chapters, this analogy appears in ***Psalms*** quite frequently (*Psalms 28:9; 74:1; 77:20; 78:52-53; 80:1; 95:7; 100:3; 121:3-8*), and it is a favorite literary device of **the prophets** (*Isaiah 40:11; 49:9-10; Jeremiah 23:1-4; 31:10; 49:19-20; 50:17-19; Micah 4:6-8; 7:14*).

Most important was the promise that God would raise up new shepherds (*Jeremiah 3:15; 23:4*), a promise that eventually took on messianic significance (*Ezekiel 34:23; 37:22, 24*). Not only would God's shepherd be from the line of David, but he would also suffer on behalf of the sheep (*Zechariah 13:7; 12:10*).

The only literal reference to **shepherds in the New Testament** is found in *Luke 2:8-20*; elsewhere they appear in parables and figures of speech, most often in the Gospels. Jesus claimed that his mission was ‘to the lost sheep of the house of Israel’ (*Matthew 10:6; 15:24*). The parable of the lost sheep was told to exemplify God's love (*Matthew 18:12-14; Luke 15:3-7*), while the shepherd's separation of sheep and goats was compared to judgment (*Matthew 25:32-33*, compare with *Ezekiel 34:17-24*). **Jesus refers to himself as the ‘good**

**shepherd' who 'lays down his life for the sheep' (*John 10:1-29*; see the quotation of *Zechariah 13:7* in *Matthew: 26:31* and *Mark 14:27*).**

Read aloud in your group from your Bibles the passages below noting the use of shepherd imagery. Many people are familiar with *Psalm 23*, but not so much with the Ezekiel passage which has a strong influence on the New Testament. Note what the texts say about good shepherds, bad shepherds, and the Lord as shepherd.

### **Psalm 23**

### **Ezekiel 34:1-24**

#### **Good Shepherds**

#### **Bad Shepherds**

#### **The Lord as Shepherd**

### **Shepherd is a key image in John's Gospel**

***John 10:1- 6*** Describes how a shepherd enters the sheepfold, calls the sheep by name, and leads them out to pasture.

**In *John 10:11-18*** Jesus identifies himself as the good shepherd, who lays down his life for his sheep. **Jesus, The Good Shepherd, says:**

- I lay down my life for the sheep
- I know my own and my own know me.
- I have other sheep to bring in.
- He works for unity – the goal is one flock, one shepherd.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. The idea that someone would lay down his or her life for another person is hard to grasp. We know that people do at times lay down their life trying to save a family member or a comrade in arms, or even more amazingly sometimes for a total stranger. Jesus says he lays down his life for the sheep. What does it mean to you that Jesus was willing to lay down his life for you?

2. Jesus says, “*I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.*” How well do Jesus and the Father know each other? How well do you know Jesus? What can you do to know Jesus better?

3. Who do you think Jesus is referring to when he says (*John 10:16*), “*I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice.*”?

4. In *John 10:27-28* Jesus mentions his voice again and adds that no one will snatch the sheep out of his hand. How does that make you feel about being one of Jesus’ sheep?

5. Jesus says, “*There will be one flock, one shepherd.*” Jesus works for unity among all those who follow him. Why is unity in a flock or a church important?

6. Read *John 21:15-19* and note the use of lambs and sheep imagery in reference to Peter. How do you think Peter felt about what Jesus told him, including that Peter, like Jesus, the good shepherd, would lay down his life?

7. How are we to live as “sheep” following Jesus our Good Shepherd?

### **Elsewhere in the New Testament:**

Jesus is called ‘**the great shepherd of the sheep**’ (*Hebrews 13:20*)

‘**the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls**’ (*1 Peter 2:25*)

‘**the chief Shepherd**’ (*1 Peter 5:4*).

### **Closing Prayer**

Jesus we thank you for being the Good Shepherd and for laying down your life for us. Help us to learn to hear and respond obediently to your voice, trusting that you know better than we do what is best for us. Help us to follow your leading, secure in the knowledge that nothing and no one can ever snatch us out of your loving hands. Shepherd and Guardian of our souls, enable us to follow you faithfully every day of our lives and use us to bring other people into your good flock. In the name of the Chief Shepherd we pray, Amen.

