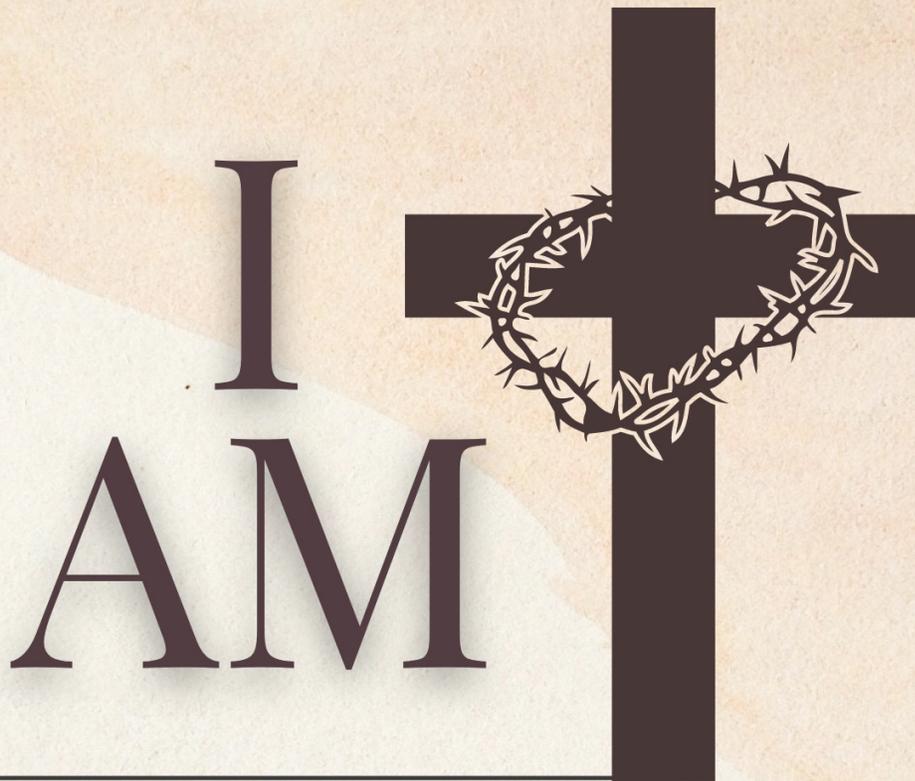


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I AM - TEACHING SERIES

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Week 2



I AM the Good Shepherd



Bible Verses:

John 10:11, Psalm 23, Psalm 80:1,
Ezekiel 34:1-4, Isaiah 40:11, John 10:24-30



Bottom Line:

Jesus guides and protects us every day.

OPENING GAME: Opposites

SUPPLIES:

- None

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME:

Everyone can play this game.

The online version can be played the same way.

Have the students stand around the room, or if you're online, students can stand in front of the camera.

The leader will shout out one of six instructions; however, the students will have to do the opposite of what is said.

For example, if the leader shouts "Left" the students should hold up their right hand.

Here are some ideas of commands you could use or come up with your own.

You will want to teach your students what to do before the game begins.

- "Right" (hold up your left hand)
- "Up" (duck down so your head can't be seen)
- "Down" (stand up)
- "Turn" (do nothing)
- "Still" (turn around)

The faster you shout them out, the more fun it will be.

If a player does it wrong, then he or she can lose a “life” (you can decide on how many “lives” you allow them to have).

Debrief with your students the challenges in having to follow the opposite of what the leader was telling them to do!

We can be thankful that our leader, Jesus, won't lead us astray!

TEACH

Have you ever had to rely on someone else to protect you?

As children, we depend on the adults in our lives to keep us safe and provide basic life necessities to keep us alive.

We trust that our parents will provide for us and keep us safe.

As we grow up and build relationships with others, we often have a mutual trust that the other person has our best interest in mind.

If not, we're likely not in a relationship with them for too long!

As we continue to explore the "I AM" statements that Jesus made, we'll discover how we can trust Him because He is our good shepherd.

Today we are going to unpack what Jesus meant when He said, "I am the Good Shepherd."

We are going to dive deep into how the good shepherd cares for His sheep...that's us!

Last week, we talked about how Jesus is the light of the world.

We talked about how the light invades the darkness and brings knowledge, freedom, and hope.

In the same way, Jesus as our good shepherd leads, guides, and cares for us.

Read John 10:11 with your students.

Before we dig in, let's talk about a few important points that will help this passage come alive to us.

Sheep are mentioned more than any other animal in the Bible.

There are 232 references to sheep in the New International Version of the Bible.

Three of the greatest men in the Old Testament—Abraham, Moses, and David—were all shepherds.

One of the most loved Psalms happens to be Psalm 23, which talks about God as our Shepherd.

The Old Testament prophecy of Jesus coming to save us by His death on the cross is found in Isaiah 53, which contains two separate images of sheep: one referring to us and one referring to Jesus.

*All of us, like sheep, have strayed away.
We have left God's paths to follow our own.
Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all." (Isaiah 53:6)*

*He was led like a lamb to the slaughter.
And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his
mouth.
(Isaiah 53:7)*

So, we can see that whether you're reading about the occupations of famous Bible characters, a well-loved Psalm, or the most popular prophecy, the imagery of sheep and the shepherd runs deep throughout God's Word.

Before we can understand deeper the role of the shepherd, we need to first look at the characteristics of the sheep.

You may already know that sheep are not really the smartest animals.

They tend to do pretty dumb things.

For example, they may fall into a river, need to be rescued, then turn around and fall into the same river again the next day.

Sheep also have poor eyesight but excellent hearing.

I wonder if perhaps, that's why Jesus said, "My sheep know my voice..." (John 10:27)

Sheep are poor leaders and great followers.

Sheep are mostly docile creatures, but they can butt like a ram if they're provoked.

Sheep are timid and fearful, so naturally, they stick together.

Sheep are mostly defenseless.

They normally cannot outrun their enemies and they have little options for fighting back (apart from ramming), so they are largely dependent on others for protection.

Sheep can be very stubborn.

They can stamp their feet and refuse to budge!

Sheep tend to wander and forget the way home.
Sheep need a shepherd...and a good one at that!

When God likens us to sheep, He isn't boosting our self-esteem!

However, sheep are particularly important to the shepherd.

If you are a follower of Jesus, you, too, are a sheep!

That means that you are looked after by one great shepherd.

Dr. A.T. Robertson (in Robertson's Word Pictures) states that the literal Greek says, "I am the Shepherd, the Good One."

I am THE Shepherd...THE good One.

So, who or what was Jesus alluding to here?

In the Old Testament, Yahweh was said to be the Shepherd of Israel (See Psalm 23, 80:1, Isa 40:11) so Jesus was certainly alluding to this in saying "I AM THE Shepherd."

But also, in contrasting Himself with the hired hands and false shepherds of Israel at the time, Jesus was alluding to another great prophecy in the book of Ezekiel.

Read Ezekiel 34:1-4 to gain further background for John 10.

What was happening in Ezekiel's day also happened in Jesus' day. In fact, it still happens today.

God's people (the sheep) can so easily be led by so-called "shepherds" who are just in it for themselves.

They'll only care about the flock to the extent that they can prosper from them.

While today there are many good shepherds, there are equally as many shepherds who aren't so good.

Jesus called people like this the "hired hands."

Since Jesus saw this happening, He promised that He would be Israel's shepherd!

In contrast to the many false shepherds, Jesus would be the one true good shepherd.

So, what does "good" mean anyway?

Jesus is saying "I am THE shepherd, the good One, The One who was prophesied."

So, let's look closer at this word *good*.

Good in the English language doesn't exactly fill one with wonder.

If you ask someone on campus how they are, they'll often say, "Yeah, good."

It means they are doing all right.

It doesn't tell us a whole lot of information at all.

If someone goes to the movies and you ask how it was and they say, "Good," then it's three apples out of five.

It's pretty good.

Not going to go on and on about it but certainly not a dud.

So, is that what Jesus meant when He said He was the "good" Shepherd?

He's a pretty good Shepherd but let's not get too excited?

Not likely!

The English word *good* doesn't do the Greek word *kalos* any justice here.

Kalos means "beautiful" or "excellent, preeminent, lovely, honorable."

Jesus is saying "I AM the Shepherd, the One spoken about. The beautiful, excellent, preeminent One."

I AM the One who looks after *all* My sheep.

So, what is the job of a Good Shepherd?

A good shepherd knows his sheep better than they know themselves.

A good shepherd cares for, feeds, and leads the sheep in the way they should go.

A good shepherd disciplines, corrects, and guides the sheep when necessary for their well-being.

A good shepherd will carry the sick and the hurting.

A good shepherd gathers the strays and finds the lost.

A good shepherd protects and defends his sheep and fights off the enemies.

All these special roles perfectly define what God, our good shepherd, is to us and for us.

It gives us just a snapshot of how much He really loves and cares for us.

It would be easy for us to slip into the thinking that because we have a good shepherd, only good things will happen to us.

If you've been following Jesus for any length of time and living day-to-day life with all the turmoil and strife surrounding you, you'd likely agree that that's not true at all!

Sometimes bad things happen.

Even Psalm 23 says that along the journey we may walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

Since God is good, does that mean that He is safe?

Having a good Shepherd means that God sometimes allows things we may not like now for our eventual good.

In that regard, God may not be considered 'safe'.

There is a great interchange in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* where Susan and Lucy first hear about Aslan.... and they are somewhat shocked to hear he is a lion!

(Leader Option: The excerpt is included below to read aloud. If you can show this scene from the movie clip, now would be a great time to do that.)

"Is - is he a man?" asked Lucy.

"Aslan a man!" said Mr. Beaver sternly. "Certainly not. I tell you he is the King of the wood and the son of the great Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea. Don't you know who is the King of Beasts? Aslan is a lion - the lion, the great Lion."

"Ooh!" said Susan, "I'd thought he was a man. Is he - quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion."

"That you will, dearie, and make no mistake," said Mrs. Beaver; "if there's anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they're either braver than most or else just silly."

"Then he isn't safe?" said Lucy.

"Safe?" said Mr. Beaver; "don't you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."

The Lord may allow things that we wouldn't consider to be "safe," but He is still good.

He's the King, I tell you!

So "good" doesn't necessarily mean "safe" for God allows some things in our lives, as He did with Job all those years ago, that

that doesn't exactly put Him in the "safe" category... at least not as we would define safe!

But if "good" doesn't mean "safe," then it does mean "secure" (eternally speaking!).

Read **John 10:24-30** with your students.

These verses share one of the greatest promises Jesus ever made.

If we are God's sheep, then we can rest assured that we are known by the Shepherd.

We can trust our Shepherd and follow Him.

In John 10, we see the relationship between the sheep and the shepherd.

And what does the Shepherd promise His sheep?

They shall never perish.

They cannot be taken out of His hand nor His Father's hand.

We often look at salvation from man's point of view with our struggles and occasional trip-ups.

From man's point of view, there is always confusion because we are inconsistent creatures.

But Jesus looked at salvation from God's point of view and that is a far better vantage point!

He knew and clearly stated that each believer—each of His sheep—was a gift from the Father to Him.

And He promised that of those that He was given, He would lose none.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. As our good shepherd, Jesus goes ahead of us and provides us with guidance.
2. What are some ways that Christ has guided you in the past? Is your current life more about following Christ or making your own path?
3. Who is the hired hand that Jesus talks about? What does the hired hand do when the sheep are in danger?
4. How can you show love and devotion to Jesus because He is your good shepherd?
5. How important is it for us to remember that all of Christ's sheep are part of one flock?
6. If someone were to refer to you as sheepish or sheep-like, would you view that as a compliment or an insult? Why?
7. Why is it important for the sheep to know the voice of the shepherd?
8. What can happen when the sheep do not recognize the voice of the shepherd?
9. Think about someone who has been a guide or helper for you in your life. What did that person do or say that helped you or provided guidance when you needed it?

10. Jesus says, "I know my sheep, and the sheep know Me" (10:14), and also, "the sheep listen to his voice" (10:3). What do you think it looks like for us, as Jesus' sheep, to have that sort of relationship with Him, our good shepherd?

11. Consider one specific area of your life where you need Jesus to be your shepherd. Talk with Him about that. If you are in a small group, discuss this with one another and pray for one another about these things.