

## Session 11: John 10:1–42

### **SESSION GOALS**

Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.

#### **Main Idea**

Jesus is our good shepherd who protects, guides, and cares for us, his sheep.

#### **Head Change**

To know Jesus offers us fullness of life today and eternal life with him.

#### **Heart Change**

To feel secure and protected by our sovereign shepherd.

#### **Life Change**

To look at Jesus's works and trust in him as the Son of God.

### **OPEN**

**What person in your life makes you feel safe? What is it about them that gives you security? Does that sense of safety change the way you behave in any way?**

People who make us feel safe often put us at ease and allow us to forget about our anxieties and rest, even if just for a moment. In this session, Jesus calls himself the good shepherd, the Son of God who protects and cares for his sheep. He is our caring, gentle, savior who offers us ultimate security, from now into eternity.

### **READ**

John 10:1–42 (If you are pressed for time, you can shorten your reading to John 10:7–18, 24–33, 37–39.)

## **WATCH**

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Dr. Tony Evans's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

**What does Jesus mean when he calls himself the door?  
The good shepherd?**

**In what ways did Jesus clearly communicate who he was to his disciples?**

**Why were people looking to kill Jesus?**

Show Session 11: *John 10:1–42* (11 minutes).

## **DISCUSS**

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Read John 10:1–21.

This chapter begins with Jesus telling a parable, but the people around Jesus do not understand what he is trying to say. **When has it been difficult for you to understand God or his Word? Where do you look for guidance when you are confused?**

When he notices the confusion in his audience, Jesus retells his parable and takes time to explain what it means. Jesus is patient and calm with his audience so that they might understand who he is and what he offers to those who follow him. **What assurance does it give you that Jesus took time with his confused listeners?**

**Note:** To dive more deeply into how we should respond to confusion, go to **Go Deeper Section 1** at the end of this study.

In the parable, Jesus refers to himself as the door to the sheepfold, meaning he is both the way to eternal security and a barrier of safety to those who trust him. **What is the importance of Jesus being the only way into his sheepfold?**

**In what ways has God protected you, one of his sheep?**

A sheepfold is an enclosure, often surrounded by a high wall, where the sheep would stay at night. There are some who say trusting Jesus is restrictive, that following him hinders their freedom to live as they please. A walled-in enclosure looks a lot like a loss of freedom. **But, according to verses 7–10, what does the sheepfold protect sheep from?**

**What are some thieves in our culture that are only looking to steal, kill, and destroy?**

Jesus goes on to describe himself as the good shepherd, the one who lays down his life for his sheep. **According to this parable and Dr. Evans's teaching, what does a good shepherd provide for his flock? In what ways is Jesus your good shepherd?**

Read verse 18 again. Jesus makes a specific point to tell his audience that he will willingly choose to lay down his

life for his sheep. He did not die because he was ambushed by thieves. He was not caught off guard by a pack of wolves. Jesus, our good shepherd, willingly laid down his life in strength to protect you. **In what ways does seeing Jesus as your good shepherd change the way you think about (or deepen your understanding of) his crucifixion?**

Once the people understand Jesus's parable, they fall into division and conflict. His big claims—that he is the shepherd of Israel and under the guidance of the Father—led some to believe that he was possessed or insane. Those who defend Jesus point to his good works as proof that he was neither possessed nor insane. **When in your life is it easiest to doubt God? What makes you think God isn't "thinking clearly"?**

Read John 10:22–39.

During the Feast of Dedication, Jesus returns to the temple where he is, again, surrounded by people questioning him. This time, they want to know if he is the Christ, or Messiah. In their view, the Christ would rescue them from oppression and free them from bondage. **In what ways has Jesus shown himself to be the Christ in your own personal life?**

**Note:** To learn more about the Feast of Dedication, commonly known as Hannukah, go to **Go Deeper Section 2** at the end of this study.

Jesus had been performing miracles for months at this point. He had, time and time again, told the people who he was and what he came to do. However, they were still "in suspense," as we see in verse 24. It can be easy to think the people in the Bible were thick and, if we were in their shoes, we would surely have known what Jesus was up to. But, even now, it can take us a long time to fully trust and obey Jesus. **Why do you think it can be hard for us to take Jesus at his word?**

Jesus points his questioners to his works. He asks them to consider what he had done, to see his actions as a testimony to his identity. **What amazing works has God done in your life? In what ways does your life testify to Jesus being the Christ?**

As a Christian, you are eternally secure. Jesus not only guides, protects, and cares for you now, but will also do

so throughout eternity. No matter what life throws at you, you can always rest in your eternal hope in Jesus. **In what ways does that hope give you confidence, peace, and joy today?**

**Note:** To take a peek at the Greek, go to **Go Deeper Section 3** at the end of this study.

But, as Christians, we aren't just waiting to go to heaven. As Dr. Evans said, "Jesus didn't die just so we could come to heaven. Jesus died so heaven could come to us." Our good shepherd is guiding, protecting, and caring for us right now! **In what ways does having a shepherd like Jesus shape the way you live as a Christian?**

Again, Jesus's words anger the Jews. They don't mind Jesus's miracles. They aren't bothered by his good works. What bothers, even enrages, them is Jesus's claim that he is God. People can see the blessings of God and still reject God. But receiving blessings is easy; accepting Jesus as Lord is hard. **What makes it so difficult to submit to Jesus?**

**What goodness have you found in submitting to him as the Son of God?**

**Note:** To think more about the "gods" of judges, go to **Go Deeper Section 4** at the end of this study.

Read John 10:40–42.

Jesus leaves the city and goes back to the Jordan River, the place where his ministry began. There, many people come to him and believe in him because they've heard the testimony of John and seen Jesus's miracles. Like John, we have a testimony to give about Jesus, and we have seen his miracles in our own lives. **What can you do to share your testimony about Jesus with those who do not know him?**

Dr. Evans asked two questions at the end of the video. Take with your group to answer his questions:

**Are you a sheep, a person following Jesus?**

**If you are one of his sheep, are you staying near to the good shepherd? What could you do to be nearer to him so that you might experience his protection, care, and guidance?**

## **LAST WORD**

Jesus is more than a good person who did some good things. He is the only way to salvation, our protector, our comforter, and our eternal hope. In him we not only find eternal life after we die, but full life here and now.

Look at his works—he was not merely a man. He was and is the Son of God who came to us so that we, like sheep, might be guided by him.

## **GO DEEPER**

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material. We've highlighted a place where each of the following segments could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide.

But you can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting.

### **1. God and Confusion**

We all go through seasons of confusion where we don't know what exactly God is up to or what he wants us from us. Even though God is never far, we can still feel alone at times. It can be disorienting, leaving us feeling exposed or even forgotten. So, how should we approach and understand our confusion?

**Is there any confusion in your life right now? If so, what bothers you about your confusion? What do you want from God to help you with your confusion?**

Read 1 Corinthians 14:33.

#### **What do we learn about God from this passage?**

God is not characterized by confusion. That does not mean we should never be confused, or even that we must have all the answers to our questions about God. There are times when he asks us to trust him, without answers to our burning questions.

But even when we don't know what God is up to or why we are going through a difficult time, we can still find his peace and purpose.

Read James 3:13–18.

Often when we think God is holding out on us, we become jealous of others and selfish, focusing only on our own lives and desires.

Take a moment to search yourself. **Is there any jealousy or selfishness within you? How might they be**

**contributing to your frustration or confusion with what God is calling you to?**

**What characterizes the “peace from above”?**

Each characteristic of God’s peace confronts our selfishness and jealousy, causing us to be less self-centered and more others-focused. They also short-circuit conflict and create a climate of peace.

**What can you do to cultivate these characteristics in your own life?**

If there is any lingering confusion in your life, take it to the good shepherd who listens, cares, and takes time to gently guide his sheep.

## **2. The Feast of Dedication**

The Feast of Dedication was an eight-day winter festival celebrating the rededication of the second temple during the Maccabean Revolution in 165 BC. Today, we know this celebration as Hannukah, or the Festival of Lights.

In the time between the Old and New Testaments, God’s people were attacked and subjugated to the Seleucid Empire. The Seleucid leader, Antiochus Epiphanes, desecrated the temple in Jerusalem, sacrificing a pig on the altar and dedicating the temple to the Greek god Zeus. He went on to require all Jews to cease worshipping God and make pagan sacrifices to show allegiance to the Seleucid Empire.

The Jews, led by four brothers called the Maccabees, started a revolution and pushed the Seleucids out of Jerusalem, cleansed the temple, and returned to worshipping the Lord. Ancient historian Josephus wrote, “And from that time to the present we observe this festival, which we call the festival of Lights, giving this name to it, I think, from the fact that the right to worship appeared to us at a time when we hardly dared hope for it” (Ant. 12.7.6 [12.325]).

However, their freedom was short-lived, and the Jews soon found themselves under Roman rule. Even though the Romans allowed Jews to worship in their own way, the Jews still felt subjugated, oppressed, and unable to fully follow God’s law under their rule. They were looking for a new Maccabee, a savior, someone to rescue them

from oppression. And here, during the Festival commemorating their emancipation from the Seleucids, they ask Jesus if he is the Christ—the liberating Messiah.

Reread John 10:22–42.

**In what ways does knowing the historical background change your understanding of the events in this passage?**

**What do you think the Jews wanted from Jesus if he was the Christ?**

**When you think about your own expectations of Jesus, what do you want him to free you from?**

**What if he doesn't free you or give you justice from that circumstance in your timing?**

Jesus Christ, the Messiah, came ultimately to liberate us from the oppression of sin and death. While he may liberate us from other circumstantial ills, he has come to offer us healing from sin and given us light in our spiritual darkness.

### **3. Peek at the Greek: They Shall Never Perish**

The words of John 10:27–28 deliver great news in any language, but its Greek construction deepens our understanding of Jesus's promise in these verses. Jesus, literally translated, promises that he gives his sheep eternal life and they will “not not perish unto eternity.”

In English, double-negatives cancel themselves out—two negatives make a positive. But in Greek, as with many languages, a double-negative is reinforcing. The negatives add up to an even bigger negative. When Jesus says his sheep will “not not perish unto eternity,” means they will *absolutely not* perish, or that it will be impossible for them to perish. It is an ironclad guarantee from Jesus himself.

What makes this promise more secure is that it is held in Jesus's hands. He gives us his life and secures us with his strength. Our salvation and security are in his steady hands, not our own. Read Romans 8:35–39.

**When you are honest with yourself, what do you think could separate you from God's love?**

**According to God’s Word, what can actually separate you from God?**

**What difference does it make in your life knowing that no force can pry you out of God’s hands? What difference does it make in your life knowing that nothing you do can make God release you from his grasp?**

Nothing can pull you out of Jesus’s hands and nothing you have done will make him let you go. He has made you a promise: if you trust in him, you will surely not perish even into eternity. Take some time right now to thank God for this new, eternal life you have found in him.

#### **4.The “gods” of Judges**

In John 10:34–39, Jesus calls out the hypocrisy of his questioning audience. But, if you aren’t familiar with the judges of the Old Testament, his argument may be confusing. In verse 34 Jesus quotes Psalm 82:6.

Read Psalm 82:1–8.

**Who is God addressing in this passage? What can we learn about them from these verses?**

Rabbinic tradition held Psalm 82 was God addressing the judges of Israel, the individuals God appointed to lead and represent him after the conquest of Canaan and before the time of the kings—you can read more about them in the book of Judges. Some of these judges served God well, some did not, but all were messengers of God to his people. They were men and women tasked by God to accomplish his will. Since they often communicated God’s words to his people, they were sometimes called *elohim* or “gods.” They were not worshipped but held in high esteem as messengers of God.

Look back at John 10:34–39. **In what ways has your understanding of this passage changed now that you understand the background of Jesus’s argument?**

When the crowd gets angry at Jesus for claiming to be God, he reminds them of the way God addressed his own messengers. If it was not blasphemy for the unjust judges of Psalm 82 to be called “gods,” how can it be blasphemy

for Jesus, the “one who the Father sanctified” and is greater than all the judges, to call himself the Son of God?

Everything Jesus did testified that he was, at the very least, a messenger from God. But his words show us that he was more than a simple messenger or earthly judge. He is *the* good messenger speaking God’s ultimate revelation: the gospel. He is *the* good judge, offering us justification and forgiveness for our sins instead of condemnation.

For the next few minutes, praise Jesus as God’s good messenger and our good judge. Instead of asking for anything from God in this prayer, focus on thanking and worshipping Jesus for who he is.