

# Good Shepherd

Seven times in the book of John, Jesus says "I am ...". These statements are not metaphors about Jesus, but rather Jesus stating that He is God. Each statement reveals part of God's character and who He is in us, making it possible for us to say, "I am new."



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## INTRODUCTION

A shepherd is someone who guides, directs, protects, and provides for sheep. In a world of so many voices, it is comforting to know that Jesus is our Good Shepherd. His voice and truth never change. Who we follow shapes who we are, so it is vital to know the characteristics of our Good Shepherd.

## STARTER QUESTION

What does it mean to say Jesus is our Shepherd? What are the dangers in following a wolf disguised as a shepherd? How can we follow Jesus daily?

## INTO THE WORD

1. We learned about several characteristics of The Good Shepherd – selflessly loving, relational/personal, inclusive and uniting, trustworthy, and powerful. After reading John 10:11-18, which characteristics of The Good Shepherd do you find most comforting? Why? Do you believe these characteristics confirm that Jesus is who He says He is? Can you think of any Old Testament verses that describe Jesus as The Good Shepherd?
2. The Good Shepherd is inclusive and uniting. He broke down the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles. What other dividing walls did Jesus break down?
3. Proverbs 13:20 and 1 Corinthians 15:33 warn us about the influence of fools and bad company. What are the consequences of associating with such people, and why do you think that is the case? Does that mean we should avoid them altogether?

## APPLICATION

4. What are things that we can do or say to show others that Jesus is our Good Shepherd?
5. What are some ways that people in our culture “follow” someone or something? Name some specific ways that following can benefit the follower. Name some specific ways that following can hurt the follower.
6. Who do you follow? Give some thought to all the watching, reading, and listening you do each year. How do you choose those inputs and how do they shape who you are and want to become?

## PRAYER

Dear Jesus, thank you for being our Good Shepherd. Help us to hear Your still, small, loving voice so that we follow Your direction for our lives. Help us to steer away from any other voice that attempts to lead us away from You. Remind us of Your selfless love, trustworthy voice, and powerful authority. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## **SUGGESTED ANSWER GUIDE / MORE FOOD FOR THOUGHT FOR SELECTED QUESTIONS:**

### **Question 1:**

It seems that only an omniscient, omnipotent God, who is the very essence of love could and would exhibit all the characteristics of The Good Shepherd. If Jesus is truly the Son of God, we should expect Him to be all these things. Some possible verses from the Old Testament that describe Jesus as the Good Shepherd include Psalm 23, Isaiah 40:11, and Ezekiel 34:11-16.

### **Question 2:**

God and man (Matthew 27:51 and Mark 15:38-39); slave and master (Colossians 3:22 and 4:1); and Roman and Greek. Also men and women (with women participating in His ministry, which was previously unheard of).

### **Question 4:**

Follow God's commandments and spread the gospel (1 John 1:6-7 and Mark 16:15):

### **Question 5:**

Our society is rife with followers of celebrities, fads, sports teams, and many other things. Often, we “follow” someone or something because we sincerely believe we will be made better for it. And sometimes we are. We can become wiser or healthier or more disciplined or a myriad of other good things due to following someone’s advice or technique or whatever they have to offer.

But following can also be a detriment when we follow the wrong person or the wrong ideologies – especially when we follow for the wrong reasons. It’s easy to fall into the trap of following someone who doesn’t have anything of lasting value to offer. When we follow in order to be liked or to gain something for selfish reasons, we run the risk of distancing ourselves from God, our source of life. If we are not careful, we can end up using our time, our talents, and our resources in ways that our Heavenly Father never intended.

We can use our gifts to benefit ourselves and others by following the right people and the right things. Ultimately, only Jesus – The Good Shepherd – is worthy of following completely.

### **Question 6:**

Who we choose to follow is of vital importance. No human is truly worthy of that position. The Bible is our most tangible touchstone for guiding our lives toward Godlikeness. A deeper prayer life to build closeness with Jesus through the Holy Spirit can’t be neglected. In the message today we heard:

To follow is to ...listen, trust, and obey.

Listening and trusting will lead to action  
Listening and trusting God will lead to obedience  
Obedience in God's economy is humility and love