

The Parable of the Good Shepherd — John 10:1–6

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John 10:1 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. ² "But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. ³ "To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ "When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ "A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers." ⁶ This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them.

1. The sheep hear the voice of the shepherd.

All sheep hear the voice of their shepherd. If a sheep knows any voice, he recognizes the voice of his shepherd. When the shepherd calls, the sheep must answer. When the shepherd summons, the sheep must approach. When the shepherd lifts the voice, the sheep must follow. The sheep listen for the voice of the shepherd and the shepherd speaks to his sheep.

2. The shepherd calls His own sheep by name.

The shepherd not only speaks to his sheep as a collective whole but the shepherd calls his own sheep by name. That a shepherd would call his own sheep by name signifies intimacy, knowledge, love, affection, and care. To call a sheep by name signifies intentionality, deliberateness, and concern. For Christ to call His own sheep by name denotes an intimate knowledge and an affectionate love.

3. The shepherd leads them all out.

Rather than a shepherd directing a sheep where to go and demanding that the sheep follow orders, the shepherd goes before the sheep and leads them all out of the pen. The shepherd leads the sheep. He goes with them and walks with them on the journey. He leads all of them out. None are left behind. There are no stragglers that are left behind in the flock of God.

4. The shepherd goes ahead of them as they journey.

When the shepherd opens the door and leads his sheep out of the pen, he goes before them to ensure their safety and to certify that they will make it to the final destination. The shepherd does not allow the sheep to wander aimlessly outside the sheep-pen. Rather, he goes on ahead of them as they journey. He prepares the way. He trims the brush and thorns. He protects from ravenous beasts and scavengers. He wards off all enemies. He goes ahead of them to protect them, guide them, and give them safety.

5. The sheep follow this shepherd because they know his voice.

A sheep will follow the shepherd because he knows the shepherd's voice and trusts him. The sheep must hear from the shepherd. The sheep follows the shepherd when the shepherd speaks. Thus, the shepherd must speak to his sheep and when he does, in fact, speak, the sheep quickly follows the command. So it must be with the children of God. The Great Shepherd speaks to the sheep through the Word. And when the Shepherd speaks, the true sheep listen, know His voice, follow Him, and gladly submit to Him.

6. The sheep will never follow a stranger and will flee from him.

If a foreign shepherd came to the sheep and beckoned the sheep to follow him, they would not listen to him. In fact, the sheep would flee from him because they do not recognize his voice. So it must be with the children of God. The true Shepherd's voice comes from the Word of God. The children of God must willingly listen for and follow the Shepherd and must also reject outright the voice and directives of false shepherds that are contrary to the Word of God.