

LESSON THREE

JOHN: 7 “I AM” STATEMENTS

“The Gate and the Good Shepherd: A disciple is shepherded by Jesus”

SCRIPTURE | John 10:7-18

MEMORY VERSE

“God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Exodus 3:14).

MAIN IDEA OF THE TEXT

Jesus is the Gate and the Good Shepherd who is committed to protecting, caring for, and watching over those who belong to Him.

GROUP TIME

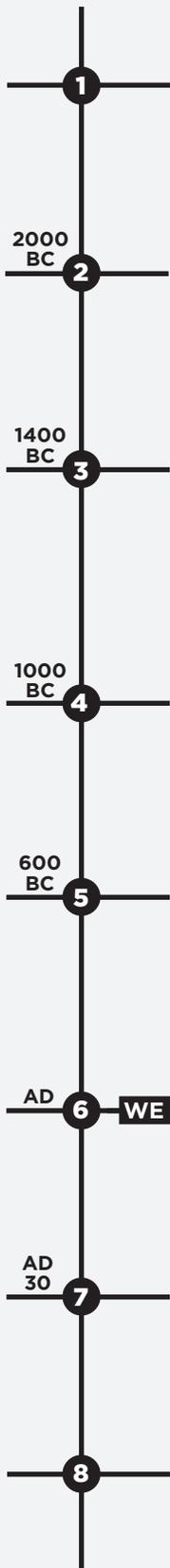
5 minutes	Welcome
5-10 minutes	Attention Grabber
10 minutes	Story / Context
25 minutes	Discussion
5-10 minutes	Closing & Prayer

PRAYER FOCUS

- **Daily Bible Reading** – Pray for yourself and others to remain committed to reading the Bible regularly.
- **Next Steps Class (Mar. 21/22)** – Pray for people to take their next step at Lakepointe: baptism, membership, serving, and Rooted.

BEGIN this time in prayer, confessing any sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of his Word, and asking the Holy Spirit to guide your study.

GOD'S STORY TIMELINE



1. God Creates the World and Promises a Rescuer (*Genesis 1-11*)

God created everything good and placed humans in a garden to live in close relationship with Him. But Adam and Eve chose to trust themselves instead of God, and sin entered the world. Relationships, creation, even our connection to God was broken. Yet even in judgment, God promised that one day, a descendant of Eve would crush the serpent and bring healing.

+This points to Jesus as the promised Rescuer who defeats sin, Satan, and death.

2. God Calls a Family and Makes a Promise (*Genesis 12-50*)

God chose a man named Abram (later Abraham) and gave a covenant to him: that he would have a large family, receive a land, and be a blessing to all nations. Though Abraham and his descendants were deeply flawed, God continued His promise through Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

+This points to Jesus as the true offspring of Abraham, through whom all nations are fully blessed.

3. God Rescues His People and Forms a Redeemed Nation (*Exodus-Deuteronomy*)

Generations later, Abraham's descendants were enslaved in Egypt. God raised up Moses to rescue them from oppression and slavery. God called His people into a relationship with Himself. He made a covenant with them, gave them the law, and instructed them in worship. He was forming a people who would live differently and show the world what it looked like to belong to Him.

+This points to Jesus as the greater Moses, who rescues us from slavery to sin and writes God's law on our hearts.

4. God Gives a Home and Promises a King (*Joshua-2 Chronicles*)

God brought His people into the promised land under Joshua's leadership. Over time, they asked for a king like the other nations. It was a disaster. But God graciously gave them David, with whom he made another covenant: one of David's descendants would rule forever. Solomon built the temple, but after his death, the kingdom split into two and began spiraling into idolatry and injustice again.

+This points to Jesus as the forever King from David's line, who reigns with justice and peace.

5. God Removes His People and Reminds Them of His Promise (*Ezra-Nehemiah*)

Because of their rebellion, God allowed His people to be conquered and taken into exile. First, it was the Northern Kingdom, Israel (to Assyria), then the Southern Kingdom, Judah (to Babylon). The temple was destroyed, and the glory of the kingdom faded. Yet God continued to speak through the prophets, reminding the people of His promise to restore them, give them new hearts, and send a Rescuer.

+This points to Jesus as the one who brings the new covenant, restores hearts, and fulfills every prophecy.

6. God Sends His Son and Fulfills His Promise (*Matthew-John*)

At just the right time, God sent Jesus into the world—born of a virgin, fully God and fully man. He perfectly obeyed the law, pointed us to the Father, and laid down His life as a sacrifice for our sins. On the third day, He rose again, proving that He is the Savior, the King, and the fulfillment of every covenant promise God has ever made.

+Jesus is the center of the story—all of Scripture leads to Him.

7. God Sends His Spirit and Builds His Church (*Acts-Jude*)

After rising from the dead, Jesus ascended into heaven and sent the Holy Spirit to empower His followers. The early Church spread the good news of Jesus across the Roman world—planting churches, welcoming both Jews and Gentiles, and learning to live as God's new covenant people. Though imperfect, the Church carries Jesus' mission forward today.

+This points to Jesus as the risen King who gives the Spirit to dwell in us and send us on mission.

8. God Restores All Things and Dwells with His People (*Revelation*)

The story isn't over. One day Jesus will return to judge evil and make all things new. There will be a new heaven and new earth, where God's people from every tribe and nation will live with Him forever. There will be no more pain, no more death, and no more sin—just joy, justice, and unbroken peace.

+This points to Jesus as the one who brings the story to its perfect and eternal culmination.

1 GRAB THEIR ATTENTION

LEADER TIP

To grab your participants' attention, start your lesson by telling a story related to the lesson's main idea. We have provided you with three options in this section, but feel free to develop your own.

OPTION 1: THE UNWATCHED GATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE

In the early hours of May 29, 1453, the city of Constantinople fell after a fifty-three-day siege by Ottoman forces. The city was heavily fortified, protected by massive walls that had repelled attacks for centuries. Its defenders assumed that if the city fell, it would be through overwhelming force at its strongest points.

But some historical accounts tell a different story. Some suggest that a small postern gate, known as the *Kerkoporta*, may have been left unsecured during the chaos of the final assault. According to these accounts, Ottoman soldiers entered through the opening, raised their banners inside the walls, and panic spread. Defensive lines collapsed, and the city was lost.

Though modern historians note that this detail is disputed, it has endured because it captures a certain truth: even the strongest defenses are vulnerable at their weakest point.

And when something entrusted with protection goes unwatched, the consequences can be irreversible. A good shepherd is attentive to the most vulnerable sheep and the places a hungry wolf might attack.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *In this story, the city didn't fall because the walls were weak but because a point of care went unwatched. What is more important for protection, presence or strength?*
- *Why do you think Jesus chose the image of a shepherd and a door to describe Himself?*

Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text:

The fall of Constantinople reminds us that protection is personal. Someone has to stay. Someone has to care enough to guard what is vulnerable. In John 10, Jesus showed the kind of care He provides for those who belong to Him.

OPTION 2 : DAVID THE SHEPHERD

Long before David was known as a king or a warrior, he was a shepherd. When he stood before Saul and explained why he was willing to face Goliath, he didn't talk about bravery or confidence. He talked about what the job required. David described how, while tending his father's sheep, a lion or a bear would sometimes come and take a lamb. When that happened, he didn't walk away and accept the loss. He went after it. He struck the animal and pulled the sheep from its mouth. And if the predator turned on him, David said he fought it.

What David assumed is important. The sheep were not expendable. Danger was not an excuse to retreat. Being entrusted with the flock meant standing between them and whatever threatened them, even when it put his own life at risk. That's what a good shepherd does. And that understanding of shepherding did not disappear. It became part of how Israel learned to recognize what faithful leadership looks like.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *In David's story, what tells you that the sheep truly belong to him rather than being animals simply under his supervision?*
- *When you sense that no one is really paying attention or taking responsibility, how does that affect the way you protect yourself and live your life?*

Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text:

Most of us know the difference between care that's distant and care that stays close. The Bible gives us an early picture of that kind of committed care in the life of David, long before anyone knew his name. That picture becomes especially important later, when Jesus described Himself using the same language.

OPTION 3 : CALL IF YOU NEED ANYTHING

“Call if you need anything” is a familiar phrase. It signals availability, but it often places the burden on the person who is already vulnerable to recognize the danger, decide it’s serious enough, and then reach out. Which kind of friend do you long for? The one who says, “I’m not going anywhere” or the one who says, “Call me if you need anything”?

The difference becomes clear in moments of real pressure. A doctor can be technically “on call” or they can stay in the room. Both have authority. Only one offers watchful presence. One waits to be summoned. The other stays close enough to notice what the patient might miss.

Access is great. Presence is greater. What people need is not just the option of help, but someone who is already watching, already committed, and already nearby.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *How does it feel different when someone stays close and pays attention rather than waiting to be asked for help?*
- *What difference does it make when care doesn’t depend on your ability to recognize danger or speak up? Why do you think we trust care more when it feels watchful rather than conditional?*

Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text:

Care is not just about being reachable but about being watchful. That distinction becomes central when Jesus described the kind of relationship He has with His people.

2 SET THE STAGE

LEADER TIP

This section provides the historical, cultural, and literary context needed to properly interpret and apply the text.

OUTLINE

- I. Prologue: Christ as the Eternal Word (1:1-18)
 - A. The Word (1:1)
 - B. The Word and creation (1:2-5)
 - C. The Word and the world (1:6-18)
- II. Presentation of Christ as the Son of God (1:19-12:50)
 - A. By John the Baptist (1:19-34)
 - B. To His disciples (1:35-51)
 - C. Through miraculous signs (2:1-12:50)**
- III. Instruction of the Twelve by the Son of God (13:1-17:26)
 - A. The Last Supper (13:1-38)
 - B. The way to the Father (14:1-31)
 - C. The true vine (15:1-27)
 - D. The gift of the Spirit (16:1-33)
 - E. Jesus's high-priestly prayer (17:1-26)
- IV. Suffering of Christ as the Son of God (18:1-20:31)
 - A. His arrest, trial, and death (18:1-19:42)
 - B. His triumph over death (20:1-31)
- V. Epilogue: The Continuing Work of the Son of God (21:1-25)
 - A. Appearances to His disciples (21:1-14)
 - B. Assignment to His disciples (21:15-25)¹

CONTEXT

When Jesus spoke the words recorded in John 10, He used language that would have felt familiar and weighty to a Jewish audience knowledgeable of the Scriptures. Shepherd imagery runs throughout Israel's story. God is repeatedly described as the shepherd of His people, and those who led Israel were measured by whether they reflected that same care. The images of sheep, shepherds, and gates are not decorative. They are ways Scripture has long spoken about how God gathers, protects, and preserves His people.

The people listening to Jesus knew the stories, the psalms, and the prophetic warnings about shepherds who fail the flock. They also knew what faithful shepherding was supposed to look like: guarding the sheep, keeping them together, and standing between them and danger.

Just before this teaching, a man born blind was healed. The man was questioned at length and eventually removed from the synagogue. From the perspective of those questioning him, they were guarding the community from error. From the man's perspective, he had been healed and then left without protection. That moment sat in the background as Jesus began to speak.

When Jesus said, "I am the gate" and "I am the good shepherd," He was not explaining the imagery. He assumed it. His words invited listeners to consider whether His actions and presence matched what Scripture had always taught them to look for in one who truly watches over God's people.

¹Andreas J. Köstenberger, "John," in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1663.

CONNECTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

When Jesus said, “I am the gate” and “I am the good shepherd,” He was not introducing new images. He was gathering together some of the most familiar ways the Old Testament speaks about God Himself.

First, the shepherd image. Throughout Israel’s Scriptures, God is repeatedly described as the shepherd of His people. Psalm 23 portrays the Lord as the one who leads, provides, and protects. Isaiah 40 speaks of God gathering lambs in His arms and gently leading those with young. Most directly, Ezekiel 34 records God’s promise that He Himself will come to search for His sheep, rescue them from danger, and shepherd them faithfully after Israel’s leaders failed to do so.

When Jesus called Himself the good shepherd, He was echoing those promises. He presented Himself as the one through whom God’s long-promised care for His people was now taking visible form.

Second, the image of the gate. In the Old Testament, access to safety, life, and God’s presence was never random. Gates marked boundaries. They protected what was inside and provided the proper way in. Jacob famously spoke of a place as “the gate of heaven” in Genesis 28, and later Israel’s worship life was shaped around guarded entrances to the tabernacle and temple. To speak of a gate is to speak of access that is intentional, guarded, and meaningful.

By combining these images, Jesus did something striking. In the Old Testament, God was the shepherd, and God provided the way into safety and blessing. In John 10, Jesus placed Himself in both roles. He was not only the one who watches over the sheep; He was also the point of access through which they are kept safe and brought into life.

FALLEN CONDITION FOCUS

We like to imagine ourselves as capable caretakers, but when pressure rises, we are far less faithful than we think. Faced with risk, fatigue, or inconvenience, we pull back, protect ourselves, and leave exposed what was entrusted to us. Sin shows itself not only in following the wrong voices but in our quiet willingness to abandon responsibility when care becomes costly.

GOSPEL RESPONSE

Jesus did not relate to us as a reluctant caretaker or a hired hand. He named Himself as the Good Shepherd who stays, who watches, and who places Himself between His sheep and danger. Where we withdraw and abandon responsibility, He remains present, even to the point of laying down His life for those who belong to Him.

LEADER TIP

In this section, you will find exercises you can use to lead your group through Observation, Interpretation, and Application. As the leader, work through all the exercises below to ensure you understand the text well.

Before verse 7, Jesus had already introduced the imagery of sheep, a sheepfold, a gate, and a shepherd (10:1–6). He described a shared enclosure where several flocks are kept, a gatekeeper who recognizes the rightful shepherd, and sheep that respond to their own shepherd's voice but refuse to follow a stranger. The point is that there is a clear difference between a shepherd who has a true claim on the sheep and outsiders who climb in another way. John noted that the people did not understand what Jesus was saying, which set the stage for the further explanation that follows.

Verse 7 shows Jesus taking up the same imagery but turning it in a new direction. Rather than focusing on the shepherd's approach to the fold, He identified Himself as “the gate for the sheep.” The emphasis moves from how a shepherd reaches the sheep to how the sheep themselves are brought into safety. A gate is the single, authorized place of entry and exit. To call Himself the gate is to place Himself at the point where protection, access, and belonging come together.

In verse 8, Jesus contrasted Himself with “all who have come before me,” describing them as thieves and robbers. The language echoes the earlier picture of illegitimate entry, but the focus is now on character and intent. These figures do not come to serve the flock. Their presence is marked by taking rather than giving. The note that “the sheep have not listen to them” suggests that those who truly belong to God are not finally drawn to such voices, even if many are impressed for a time. The contrast does not erase faithful leaders in Israel's history; it exposes the pattern of false guides and self-appointed saviors who leave people worse off than before.

Verse 9 expands what it means for Jesus to be the gate. To “enter through” Him is to be saved. The picture is of sheep passing into a secure enclosure at night and going out to good pasture by day. The phrase “come in and go out” is a common way of describing settled, secure life under God's care. The sheep do not have to find their own way to safety or provision. Their well-being is tied to their connection with the gate through which they pass.

In verse 10, Jesus set the purposes side by side. The thief's purpose is singular and destructive: to steal, kill, and destroy. Jesus's purpose is equally focused but entirely different: that the sheep might have life and have it to the full. Within the picture, the idea is that the sheep are safe, well-fed, and at rest rather than harried and hungry. Within John's Gospel more broadly, this “fullness” points to the quality of life that comes from knowing God through the Son—life that is not thin, fragile survival but deep, durable wholeness.

Verse 11 introduces a second key image: “I am the good shepherd.” Here Jesus moved from the language of access to the language of personal care. In the biblical world, a good shepherd was not soft or sentimental. The work was demanding and often dangerous. What marked this shepherd as “good” was his willingness to lay down his life for the sheep. That is more than a statement about bravery. It introduces the

idea that the shepherd's own life will be given up so that the flock can be preserved.

Verses 12–13 draw a sharp contrast with the hired hand. The hired hand works among the sheep but has no real claim on them, and they have no claim on him. When danger appears, his instinct is to protect himself. He runs, and the result is predictable: the flock is exposed and scattered. The problem is not that he is paid for his work. The problem is that he has no true attachment to the sheep. Their loss does not cost him anything beyond his job.

Verse 14 returns to Jesus's positive claim and deepens it. Again He said, "I am the good shepherd," and added that He knew His sheep and His sheep knew Him. This is not simply awareness. It is the kind of recognition that grows from ongoing relationship. The comparison He makes in verse 15 is striking. The mutual knowledge between shepherd and sheep reflects, in a real though lesser way, the mutual knowledge between the Father and the Son. The security of the flock rests on a relationship rooted in God's own inner life.

Verse 15 also repeats and underlines the central action: "I lay down my life for the sheep." The wording points beyond the everyday risks of shepherding to Jesus's deliberate self-giving in death. A normal shepherd might face danger and hope to survive. Jesus spoke of His death as a known and chosen act for the sake of those who belong to Him. The sheep are preserved not because danger never comes but because their shepherd steps into it in their place.

Verse 16 widens the field of vision. Jesus spoke of "other sheep that are not of this sheep pen." In the immediate context of John's Gospel, the existing fold is Israel. The "other sheep" are those outside that fold who will be brought in through the same shepherd—Gentiles who, in time, would hear His voice and respond. The goal is not two separate groups with parallel arrangements, but "one flock, one shepherd." Unity comes not from shared background but from shared attachment to Christ.

Verses 17–18 turn to the relationship between Jesus and the Father in connection with this self-giving. The Father loves the Son as the one who lays down His life and takes it up again. Jesus's death was not an accident or an interruption. It was part of a purpose that included resurrection. He made it clear that no one took His life from Him in the ultimate sense. He laid it down of His own accord and had authority to take it up again. Both actions were carried out in obedience to a command received from the Father.

To call Himself the gate was to claim that He is the single, God-given way into safety and life. To call Himself the good shepherd was to claim that He takes personal responsibility for the flock to the point of death. Those who enter through Him and are known by Him are not kept safe by their own strength but by His settled decision to stand where the danger is and not walk away.

JOHN 10:7-18

7 Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. 9 I am the gate; whoever

enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. 13 The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. 14 “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. 17 The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my father.”

OBSERVATION: WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Gather in groups of three to five people to discuss the Observation and Interpretation questions.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 1: JESUS’S FIRST IDENTIFICATION

Read John 10:7–10. What did Jesus say He is, and what outcomes did He describe for those who enter through Him?

Suggested Response: Jesus said, “I am the gate for the sheep.” He said those who enter through Him will be saved, will come in and go out, and will find pasture. He contrasted this with the thief, who comes to steal, kill, and destroy, while He came to give life in abundance.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 2: THE GOOD SHEPHERD VERSUS THE HIRED HAND

Read John 10:11–13. How did Jesus contrast the good shepherd with the hired hand?

Suggested Response: Jesus said the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand runs away when he sees the wolf coming, leaving the flock scattered and vulnerable, because the sheep do not belong to him.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 3: JESUS’S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SHEEP

Read John 10:14–18. What did Jesus say about His relationship with the sheep? What future outcome did He describe for the flock?

Suggested Response: Jesus said He knows His sheep and His sheep know Him, just as He knows the Father. He said He has other sheep not from the current fold and that they will be brought together so there will be one flock and one shepherd. He also said He lays down His life willingly and has authority to take it up again.

INTERPRETATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 1: MEANING OF THE GATE

Based on John 10:7-10, what did Jesus mean by calling Himself “the gate”? Why does He contrast Himself so sharply with the thief?

Suggested Response: By calling Himself the gate, Jesus presented Himself as the single point through which safety, life, and provision are found. The contrast with the thief clarifies that His purpose is fundamentally different. He brings life and protection, not loss or harm. The image emphasizes exclusive access and intentional care.

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 2: WHAT MAKES THE SHEPHERD GOOD

In John 10:11-13, why did Jesus define the good shepherd by laying down his life? What does the hired hand reveal about false care?

Suggested Response: Jesus defined the good shepherd by his willingness to absorb danger for the sake of the sheep. The hired hand reveals that care without belonging collapses under pressure. True shepherding is shown not in calm conditions but in what happens when risk appears.

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 3: KNOWING AND BELONGING

In John 10:14-18, what did Jesus mean by saying He knows His sheep and they know Him? How does this relate to His death and the promise of one flock?

Suggested Response: The language of knowing points to a real, relational bond rather than simple awareness. Jesus tied this relationship to His willing death, showing that His care is purposeful and costly. The promise of one flock under one shepherd shows that this relationship extends beyond a single group to all who respond to His voice.

APPLICATION: HOW DO I RESPOND?

QUESTION 1: As you reflect on John 10:7-18, what stood out to you most? Was there a word, image, or contrast that felt especially weighty or surprising?

Suggested Response: Responses will vary. Encourage participants to name specific words, phrases, or moments in the conversation that caught their attention. Use follow-up questions to invite deeper reflection rather than quick answers.

LEADER TIP

In this section, you will find questions to choose from that will help your group consider how God calls them to respond to the text. Help your group set measurable action steps.

QUESTION 2: Jesus described Himself as both the gate and the shepherd. Where in your life right now do you most want protection, care, or assurance that someone is truly watching over you?

Suggested Response: Some may name areas of vulnerability, such as family concerns, work pressure, health issues, or emotional strain. Others may recognize a general sense of exposure or fatigue. This question helps uncover where the desire for safety and care is most acute.

QUESTION 3: Jesus contrasted the good shepherd with the hired hand who left when danger appeared. When responsibility becomes costly or uncomfortable, what is your natural tendency? Is it to stay engaged or to pull back?

Suggested Response: When responsibility becomes costly, the instinct is often to reduce exposure by pulling back emotionally, lowering expectations, or disengaging just enough to protect ourselves. At times we remain present in name but guarded in heart, doing what is required while withholding care. This question presses us to notice how easily self-preservation can replace faithfulness, and how abandoning responsibility often looks reasonable rather than dramatic.

QUESTION 4: Jesus said His sheep know His voice and trust Him. What voices most shape your sense of direction right now? How do you tell the difference between voices that truly care for you and those that simply demand something from you?

Suggested Response: You may identify cultural expectations, internal pressure, fear, or the opinions of others. Some may recognize how easily urgency or anxiety can masquerade as guidance. The goal is not to sort everything out but to notice what influences trust and obedience.

QUESTION 5: If trusting Jesus as the Good Shepherd means staying close to Him rather than relying on your own awareness, what is one small, concrete way you could practice that this week? How could our group support you in that step?

Suggested Response: Examples might include naming a specific worry to release in prayer, resisting the urge to control an outcome, or choosing to remain present in a responsibility that feels draining. Group support could include prayer, follow-up conversations, or simply naming that step together. The focus is on shared faithfulness, not self-improvement.

4

CHALLENGE

LEADER TIP

End your study time with one final challenge and prayer. Your final challenge should pull together everything you covered in this lesson and call your participants to action.

Much of our week is spent trying to anticipate problems before they arrive. We stay alert, keep options open, and learn how to minimize risk. Over time, that posture can harden into a quiet belief that safety depends on how well we manage things ourselves. Jesus spoke to that instinct by presenting Himself as the one who guards the entrance and stays with the flock. His words raise a deeper question about where we look for security when life feels fragile.

Following Jesus as the Good Shepherd invites us to loosen our grip on self-protection and to trust His care in places where we would rather stay in control.

- Where in my week am I most likely to take responsibility for my own safety instead of entrusting myself to Jesus's care?
- What situation right now feels risky or uncertain? How might staying close to Jesus reshape the way I respond instead of defaulting to control or withdrawal?
- How can our group create space to name vulnerability honestly rather than pretending we are fine or handling things alone?

The way of Jesus is not built on our ability to anticipate every threat. It is formed by learning to belong to a shepherd who does not step away when the cost rises.

Let's pray.