

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Week 3: The Gate and the Good Shepherd: A disciple is shepherded by Jesus.

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

John 10:7-18

“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)

OBSERVATION: WHAT DOES IT SAY?

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

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.

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.