

I Am the gate. John 10. Study and Discussion Guide 15 Feb 2026

Introduction

Imagine Jesus is standing facing an attentive but squinting crowd. Magine you are among them. The middle eastern sun blazes in the morning sky. Behind Jesus is a rough rock wall. From behind the wall emanates the bleating of a small flock of scraggly sheep, jostling with each other for the meagre supply of grass in the small rocky enclosure. There are two or three small flocks and two or three shepherds sharing the enclosure. One shepherd calls each of his own sheep by name and leads them out through the gate. His sheep follow. The others stay with their own shepherd, enclosed by a rocky fence, secured by a closed gate.

Jesus and the crowd watch this scene play out. Jesus then speaks.

Read John 10:1-10

“Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. ² The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep.³ The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.”⁶ Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

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.

Discussion Questions

1. Why might Jesus have chosen sheep and shepherding as an analogy?
2. When we read these ten verses we see Jesus presented as the shepherd, then as the gate and then after verse 10 he is the shepherd again. Do we find this fluidity a nuisance or does it help us grasp Jesus’ point?
3. In 10:6 we see that the Pharisees did not understand Jesus’ point. Why might they have not grasped the point that Jesus was making? What was that point?
4. When Jesus describes himself as the gate, what point is he making?
5. Who are the thieves and robbers? Verse 1 is probably a useful clue. Also, rad the excerpt below.

In this second statement Jesus says, *I am the gate for the sheep* (v. 7). The scene has shifted from the village to the open field. **In the summer sheep are sometimes kept out in the pasture overnight. The pen used is simply an enclosure made of piled rocks. There is neither roof nor door, but thorns along the top of the rock walls protect the sheep from wild animals, and the shepherd himself sleeps in the entrance, providing a door (cf. Bailey 1993:11; Beasley-Murray 1987:169). So when Jesus says he is *the gate for the sheep* (v. 7) he is still using the image of a shepherd, but applying it directly to himself.** From this picture of a shepherd sleeping in the entrance we would expect Jesus' role to be the protector of the sheep. Jesus does indeed protect his own (cf. 6:39; 17:12), but the image is developed here in a surprising way. The sheep are to *enter through* Jesus (v. 9), something not true of the shepherd sleeping in the entrance of a summer shelter! So the image is not that of a door as a barrier for protection, but of a door as a passageway.

Jesus also refines his earlier reference to the thief and robber (v. 1), saying, *All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers* (v. 8). This is a sweeping generalization. If it were not for references to Moses, the prophets and John the Baptist as witnesses to Jesus (for example, 1:17, 19-36; 5:39), then they would seem to be included in the category of *all who ever came*

before me. But the context of our passage is the condemnation of the Jewish rulers, some of whom have rejected Jesus and others who have faith in him. This sweeping statement shows that these leaders are members of a much larger group. Jesus, the one mediator of salvation, contrasts himself with all others who would claim to be "mediators of salvation" (Beasley-Murray 1987:170). The reason Moses, the law, the prophets and John the Baptist are not included in this condemnation is precisely because they bear witness to Jesus. All who do not bear witness to Jesus, who alone has seen the Father and makes him known (1:18), are not of the truth. They do not bring blessing but rather take it away, like a thief or a robber.

<https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/ivp-nt/Jesus-Is-Gate-Sheep>

6. Who are the thieves and robbers in today's culture, and what message do they preach that opposes the gospel?
7. Do we walk / live in the abundant life that Jesus describes in John 10:10?
8. Can abundant life and tough circumstances co-exist without contradiction?

Response

Imagine the sheep continue to bleat, the sun continues to blaze. Some of the crowd drifts away. Others linger. Some ask Jesus more about this life to the full. Where are you in the crowd? What are you thinking? What are you doing? Do you want to stay?

Jesus is here today, now. You can go with some of the crowd. You can stay and linger, hang around Jesus and learn from Him.

You can enter through the gate. Perhaps you never have? Perhaps you know today is your day?

Pause, pray, ponder. Maybe pray individually or together as a group.