



Lesson Title: The I Am's of John—I Am the Good Shepherd



Key Concept: Throughout the Book of John, Jesus used the Old Testament declaration "I Am" to reveal the different facets of his relationship with us. Human shepherds may be fallible, but Jesus' commitment and treatment towards us shows him to be the ultimate good shepherd.



Scriptures:

⁴⁴ And the Lord gave them rest on every side, just as he had solemnly promised their ancestors. None of their enemies could stand against them, for the Lord helped them conquer all their enemies. ⁴⁵ Not a single one of all the good promises the Lord had given to the family of Israel was left unfulfilled; everything he had spoken came true.
(Joshua 21:44–45 *New Living Translation*)

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep."
(John 10:11 *New Living Translation*)

Context Scriptures: John 10; Ezekiel 34:1–6; Psalm 23; Zechariah 11:15–16; Hebrews 13:17



Lesson Thoughts:

Throughout the Scriptures, cultural terms and agrarian metaphors were used to relay God's messages to the people—wheat and tares, vineyards and farmers. One of the most powerful and telling metaphors, however, is that of a shepherd and how they care for their sheep. Perhaps because sheep are particularly vulnerable, the responsibility of a shepherd is meaningful.

The Hebrews were a good example of a defenseless people. In the Book of Exodus, they were enslaved to the Egyptians with no hope of freedom. But the one true God, the great I AM, was determined to deliver his people. He pummeled the Egyptians to set the Hebrews free, and brought them—a people

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with no military training or weapons—through high water, unfamiliar lands, and hostile adversaries. When all was said and done, God had victoriously shepherded this massive band of helpless people to a land where they dwelled in peace and safety.

From that point, God called men and women to play a role in shepherding his flock: to guide, feed, care for, and protect them. Unfortunately, most failed miserably. Ezekiel's prophecy included a vivid description of how those bad shepherds treated their flocks. They fed themselves instead of the flock; they kept the best for themselves; they neglected the weak, sick, and injured; they abandoned the lost and treated the flock cruelly (Ezekiel 34:2–4). It was apparent that human shepherds couldn't measure up to the good shepherd.

In the Book of John, Jesus (God made flesh) stated: "I am the good shepherd." As the good shepherd, Jesus gathers and regulates the fold—who comes in and who goes out. He leads the flock beside still waters and protects them on every side—even to his own death! David described the security the sheep experience under the good shepherd's care: "Even when the way goes through Death Valley, I'm not afraid when you walk at my side. Your trusty shepherd's crook makes me feel secure" (Psalm 23:4 *The Message*). What a contrast to the bad shepherds! Just as God lovingly shepherded the Hebrews to the promised land, Jesus continues to shepherd all who are his in peace and safety to the place he has prepared.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) What do the attributes of a bad shepherd, as spelled out in Ezekiel 34:1–6, tell us about the attributes of a good shepherd?
- 2) As a group, read John 10:1–16. As the good shepherd, what is Jesus saying he does and is?
- 3) If Jesus is the ultimate good shepherd, why does he call fallible human shepherds to care for his flock?
- 4) What is our role as sheep in being kept safely?

Next Lesson: I Am the True Vine

Notes and Reflections

- 1) Read Hebrews 13:17. What should be the relationship of shepherd and sheep?
- 2) Why do you think human leaders sometimes fail to faithfully care for God's people?
- 3) We are all called to care for one another. Have you ever failed to faithfully care for God's people? Why?
- 4) As sheep, despite the failures of human leadership, how do we remain steadfast in following God?

Notes and Reflections, cont.