

CHURCH.

LESSON 24

1	PRAYER
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Group leader. Pray for God's guidance through his Spirit, for awareness of his presence and for listening to his voice. Commit your group and this lesson about church building to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes) [QUIET TIMES] 2 TIMOTHY 2 - 4
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Take turns and share (or read from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times out of the assigned Bible passages (2 Timothy 2 - 4).

Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares. Take notes.

3	MEMORISATION (5 minutes) [KEY VERSES IN JOHN] REVIEW KEY VERSES IN JOHN
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Review two by two the last 5 memorised Bible verses from John.

(6) **John 5:24.** I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

(7) **John 6:37.** All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

(8) **John 7:38.** Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.

(9) **John 8:12.** I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

(10) **John 10:28.** I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.

4	BIBLE STUDY (85 minutes) [THE GOSPEL OF JOHN] JOHN 10:1-42
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Introduce. John 10:1-39 describes **the allegory** of the good shepherd and the appeal of Jesus Christ to the Pharisees and disciples that he is the Son of God.

STEP 1. READ.	GOD'S WORD
<i>Read.</i> LET US READ John 10:1-42 together. Let us take turns to read one verse each until we have completed the reading.	

STEP 2. DISCOVER.	OBSERVATIONS
<i>Consider.</i> WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU? Or WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE TOUCHES YOUR MIND OR HEART? <i>Record.</i> Discover one or two truths that you understand. Think about them and write your thoughts in your notebook. <i>Share.</i> (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, take turns to share). Let us take turns to share with one another what each of us has discovered. (Remember: In every small group, the group members will share different things)	

10:26-29

Discovery 1. The assurance of salvation.

(1) Assurance of salvation is based on the promise and power of Jesus Christ.

In John 10:27-28, Jesus says about those people who are his sheep, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand." Jesus promises three absolute certainties concerning those people who are his sheep.

- True believers already now possess eternal life, that is, the life that characterises the coming age of the new heaven and the new earth! And this life is ever lasting: it will never end!
- True believers cannot backslide in such a way that they perish, that is, they will never be condemned to everlasting separation from God's presence and loving care!
- True believers cannot be snatched away out of the hand of Jesus, that is, no one is powerful enough to snatch them from Christ's powerful protection and care!

But who are true believers? Jesus says, true believers are known by Jesus; they will obey his voice; and they will follow Jesus and no other religion, philosophy or value-system. No Christian needs to doubt the promise of Jesus about assurance of salvation. But also no one can call himself a sheep of Christ, that is, a Christian if he does not fulfil his responsibility to listen to Christ and obey Christ!

(2) The assurance of salvation is based on the fact that God the Father has given us to Jesus Christ.

In John 10:26, Jesus says to the Jews who do not believe in him, “You do not believe because you are not my sheep”. This verse contains two very important truths in the Bible, namely, on the one hand, the doctrine of divine predestination and on the other hand, the doctrine of human responsibility. It is not possible for us to harmonise these two doctrines, because they run parallel in the Bible.

On the one hand, every human being is himself responsible to believe or not to believe in Jesus Christ. The Jews alone are fully responsible for their sin of unbelief! He says, “You do not believe (John 10:26)!” This is human responsibility! When we preach the gospel, we preach human responsibility to all people in the world. All people in the world have the responsibility to repent and believe (Mark 1:15).

On the other hand, God the Father chooses whom he gives to Jesus and whom he does not give to Jesus. Jesus says, “What (the flock of sheep) my Father has given me, is greater (more excellent) (than all other creatures on earth), and no one can snatch them (the flock) out of my Father’s hand” (John 10:29).” Jesus teaches this truth also in John 6:37,44 and 65, “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. ... No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. ... This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.” Only those people whom God the Father draws irresistibly to Jesus Christ, will come to Jesus Christ and believe in him! This is divine predestination! We should teach the truth of divine predestination only to believers in the Church, because unbelievers cannot understand this.

The fact that I believe in Jesus Christ and now follow him is a great assurance that God the Father has given me to Jesus Christ! All believers in the world may be sure that they belong to the Shepherd and his flock (John 10:27-29).

10:30-33

Discovery 2. The fact that Jesus Christ is God.

(1) Jesus Christ claims to be one with God the Father.

In John 10:30, Jesus says, “I and the Father are one”. Jesus does not simply refer to the fact that they are outwardly one, that is, one in the works that they do. He definitely refers to their essential unity: their inner, spiritual, ontological, trinitarian and eternal unity. When he says, “we are”, he is speaking of two Persons (inner distinctions within the unity of the divine nature) (cf. Matthew 28:19, one divine name or nature with three inner distinctions within that one divine nature). And when he says “one”, he is speaking of *one substance or being*. This is called the Trinity. This verse is important, because it rejects two wrong teachings:

- It rejects the denial of the unity in the being of God
- It rejects the diversity in the Being of God.

(2) The Jews understood the claim of Jesus: he made himself to be God.

Earlier Jesus had claimed to be equal with God. In John 5:17-18 and 23, Jesus claimed that he was equal in essence, equal in works and equal in honour with God the Father! In John 8:58-59 Jesus claimed that he existed before Abraham was born! The Jews understood this as blasphemy, because they picked up stones to stone him.

Therefore, in John 8:24, Jesus warns the Jews, “If you do not believe that I AM (the One I say I am) (the same Name as of God in the Old Testament in Exodus 3:14), you will indeed die in your sins!” It is not enough to believe that Jesus Christ was just a good man or a prophet. No, unless people (including people from other religions) believe that Jesus is everything he claimed to be (in the Bible), they will certainly die in their sins! That is, they will certainly not come into Paradise, but certainly go to hell! It is absolutely essential to believe that Jesus Christ is absolutely equal to God the Father, that he is one with God the father!

STEP 3. QUESTION.

EXPLANATIONS

Consider. WHICH QUESTION ABOUT ANYTHING IN THIS PASSAGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO ASK TO THIS GROUP?

Let us try to understand all the truths in John 10:1-42 and ask questions about the things we still do not understand.

Record. Formulate your question as clearly as possible. Then write your question in your notebook.

Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, let each person first share his question.)

Discuss. (Then, choose a few of these questions and try to answer them by discussing them together in your group.)

(The following are examples of questions the students might ask and some notes about the discussion of the questions.)

10:1-16

Question 1. What is the meaning of the allegory about the good shepherd?

Notes. In the Gospel of John, the Good Shepherd (John 10) and the Vine and the branches (John 15) are two allegories. An “allegory” is a narrative description of a subject under guise of another having similarities to it.

(1) The life of shepherds in Israel.

Everyone in Israel knew the life of shepherds. A village might have only one big sheep pen, in which several flocks of sheep were kept during the night. A watchman guarded them during the night. In the morning, the shepherds would come to lead their flocks out to graze and drink. The watchman knew the shepherds and opened the gate for them. Each flock of sheep knew the voice of their own shepherd and would not follow another shepherd. But also the shepherd knew his own sheep, even by name. The shepherd loved his sheep and would defend them against wolves and even against lions and bears, as king David did.

(2) The story in John 10:1-16 is an allegory.

A metaphor is an implied comparison. For example, “The LORD is my shepherd” (Psalm 23:1) is a metaphor. It is implied that the LORD is just like a shepherd.

An allegory is an extended metaphor. For example, Jesus can be compared to several aspects of a good shepherd. However, in an allegory we should not attempt to explain every characteristic of the symbol.

In John 10, Jesus himself gives the interpretation of several of the symbols used in the allegory. For example, the shepherd refers to Jesus himself. The door also refers to Jesus himself. The sheep pen refers to Israel (John 10:16). The sheep are not all the people in Israel and also not all the people in the world. The sheep are only those for whom Christ died; those who are destined to be saved; those who obtain eternal life; those who listen to the voice of Jesus Christ; and those who follow Jesus Christ. The “one flock” refers to the Church consisting of saved believers people in the world (John 10:16).

Some symbols, for example, the thief, robber, stranger, and hired hand, can be interpreted by the historical situation. Other symbols, like the watchman and the wolf, should not be interpreted, because neither Jesus nor the context interprets them. The main idea should be grasped.

(3) The main idea of the story.

In John 10, the main theme is the good shepherd, Jesus, who is contrasted with the evil shepherds, the Jewish religious leaders and teachers.

Jesus is the true and perfect shepherd. He entered the sheep pen of Israel by the way God predicted in the Old Testament: via the tribe of Judah; the house of David; his mother was a virgin; and he was born in Bethlehem.

He knows every true believer (Christian) by name. Moreover, the believers know Jesus as their true Shepherd and will only follow him. Jesus led his sheep with love and by example, by walking in the front. The Jewish religious leaders and teachers, however, were like thieves and robbers. They avoided the gate (the door), Jesus Christ, and were trying to control the people of Israel by man-made rules and through intimidation. They threatened to exclude everyone who did not do what they said. They did not *lead* the people of Israel (as a shepherd), but *drove* them on (as a cowboy) with threats. True believers would run away from them.

Jesus, like a true shepherd, laid down his life for believers on the cross. But the Jewish religious leaders and teachers destroyed true spiritual life.

Jesus is the shepherd of this sheep pen, namely the true believers in the nation of Israel, as well as of the true believers in all the other sheep pens in the world. He leads his sheep out of each nation (tribe, language, people) out of their original national sheep pens and forms one new international flock (John 10:16)! The believers (Christians) out of the Jewish nation and out of the Gentile nations together form one Body of Christ (the worldwide Church), one kingdom!

(4) The lessons from this story.

This allegory teaches us how important it is to enter through the gate (the door), Jesus Christ, into the community of believers. How important it is to know Jesus Christ personally and intimately. How important it is to follow Jesus and obey his voice. Only when we follow close behind him, will he protect us from the people who want to control us and destroy us. This allegory also teaches us that there are different sheep pens (nations with their cultures) in the world, but only one flock of believers in the whole world, namely the Church of Christ or the kingdom of Christ! The Bible rejects the idea of various denominations (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:3-4).

10:7,10

Question 2. Why is Jesus compared to a gate (a door) and also to a shepherd?

Notes. The symbol of Jesus as “the gate (door)” only explains or amplifies the symbol of Jesus as “the good shepherd”. When Jesus says in verse 7, “I am the gate (door) of the sheep” he claims to be the only One through whom people obtain legitimate access into his community (the Church)! There is simply no other entrance into Christ’s Church or into God’s kingdom (cf. John 14:6)!

Jesus Christ is at the same time the gate (door) to the sheep and the gate (door) for the sheep. Jesus claims in verse 8 that he is for true shepherds (church leaders and pastors) the only legitimate entrance to reach the sheep. All the people who try to get to the sheep without entering through him are thieves and robbers. This is also true for false prophets among Christians and the other non-Christians religions in the world. Jesus claims in verse 9 that he is for the sheep the only way through which they can obtain salvation and pasture.

10:9-10

Question 3. What does Jesus mean when he says that whoever enters through him will be saved?

Notes. In John 3:16-17, “to be saved” means to have eternal life. In John 10:28, the sheep of Jesus Christ receive eternal life, they will never perish and nobody can snatch them out of his hand. Therefore, the meaning in John 10:9 cannot simply be that whoever enters through Jesus Christ, will be *safe* only. It means much more. They will first be *saved* from the guilt, shame, enslaving power and pollution of sin and from the eternal condemnation brought about by sin. They will receive eternal life. And then they will also dwell safely in the presence of their Shepherd, Jesus Christ. Nothing that happens to them on earth can really harm them. They will experience his daily care and protection. They will find abundant blessings in his pasture.

10:11

Question 4. Does Jesus die for everyone or only for his sheep?

Notes. John 10:11 says, “I AM the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep”. It does not say that he lays down his life for everyone in the world.

Who are “the sheep” for which he lays down his life? John 10:27-28 says that they are those who listen to his voice and follow him. They are those who receive eternal life and will never perish! They are the people that cannot be snatched out of his hand (Note: nominal Christians can be snatched away and perish, because they have never been sheep of Jesus Christ! Therefore, the atoning death of Jesus Christ is *sufficient* for all people that have ever lived (John 3:17, but only *effective* in the lives of people who are his sheep (John 3:16,18)! That is why Jesus says that he gives his life for the sheep. God’s salvation work through Jesus Christ cannot be thwarted by the decision or effort of any human being. His salvation work is always sovereign, irresistible and effective (cf. Mark 10:45; Romans 8:29-30; 9:6-18; 1 Thessalonians 2:13-15).

To summarise: While Christ’s atoning death is *sufficient* for all people who ever lived, his death is *effective* only for those who are saved. While the gospel must be preached to all people who live, not all people respond by faith in Christ. While God draws his people from all nations that exist in the world (John 6:44; 12:32), not all people of all nations come to Christ (John 1:11; 6:37) and thus not all people in the world are saved. The Bible does not teach universal salvation Titus 2:11 may NOT be translated as: “The saving grace of God to all people has appeared”, but as “The saving grace of God has appeared to all people”

10:16

Question 5. What does Jesus mean when he says that he must bring other sheep from other sheep pens to form one flock?

Notes.

(1) Jesus gathers his sheep out of the nation of Israel and out of the other nations in the world into his Church or kingdom.

It is clear from the whole story and especially verse 16 that “the sheep pen” refers to the nation of Israel. Jesus is bringing his sheep (Jewish believers in Jesus) out of their sheep pen (the nation of Israel) into his Church or Kingdom. During the Old Testament period God allowed the Gentile nations to go their own way (Acts 14:16). But during the first period of his ministry on earth Jesus concentrated on the nation of Israel (Matthew 10:5-6).

But later Jesus made it clear that he had also come to gather his sheep out of the other nations. He must also bring them out of their sheep pens (their nations with their national cultures) into his one flock (John 10:16).

(2) Believers from all the other nations in the world will enter into his kingdom on the basis of complete equality with the Jewish believers.

The Old Testament prophesied that God would *extend* his work of salvation to all the nations in the world. In Genesis 12:3, God promised that he would bless all the families of the earth through the Messiah. In Joel 2:28 he promised that he would pour out his Spirit on people from all nations. In Malachi 1:11 he predicted that his name would be great among all the nations.

However, the view of the prophets in the Old Testament was that the people from the other Gentile nations would be saved by joining the nation of Israel (cf. Isaiah 2:2-4; 54:2-3; 62:10-12; Zechariah 8:23)!

The following three teachings were still a mystery that had not yet been revealed to the prophets of the Old Testament:

- The teaching that God's work of salvation would no longer be concentrated in the nation of Israel, but will be extended to all the Gentile nations (Matthew 24:14; Matthew 28:19).
- The teaching that God's people no longer consists of mainly believers from Israel, but from all nations in the world. God's people are now the Church of Christ or the kingdom of God (1 Peter 2:9-10).
- The teaching that the believers from the Gentile nations would enter into the kingdom of God on basis of equality with the believers from the nation of Israel (Ephesians 3:1-6).

Jesus Christ made these truths only known to his apostles during the New Testament period. In Ephesians 1:9-10 we read that God revealed that he was going to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one Head, Christ. In Ephesians 3:1-6, we read that God revealed to the apostles and prophets in the New Testament something the prophets in the Old Testament did not know. Through the preaching of the gospel, God was going to make all believers out of the Gentile nations:

- heirs together with the believers in God's Old Testament people Israel
- members together of one and the same Body (of Christ)
- sharers together in the promise in Christ.

God did not terminate his Old Testament people (the believers in Israel) or replace Israel with the New Testament Church, but continued it on a higher plane (on basis of his completed work of salvation of Jesus Christ and the fulfilment of the Law and Prophets) and extended (enlarged) it to include believers from all the other nations in the world.

Note, the translation of John 10:16, "And other sheep I have that are not out of (Greek: ek) this sheep pen; and those I must lead (bring, take along) (Greek: agó); and my voice they will hear; and it will become one flock, one shepherd (Greek: mia poimné, heis poimén)." Jesus does not say that he will lead the sheep of all the other nations *into* the sheep pen of Israel. He clearly teaches that he leads his sheep out of their natural sheep pens and makes them into his one and only "flock", the Church or Kingdom! The natural nations of Israel or the Gentiles are not important anymore. What is important is the kingdom of God (cf. Matthew 8:11-12; 21:42-44)! The branches of both the natural olive tree (the believers from the nation of Israel) and the branches from the wild olive trees (the believers from the Gentile nations) are grafted by faith onto the root (Jesus Christ and his new covenant people) (Romans 11:16-24).

10:29

Question 6. What is the correct translation from verse 29?

Notes. Verse 29 does not have the word "them" in the original Greek. The word "greater" rather refers to the flock of sheep than to God the Father. The earliest manuscripts in the original probably are correct and they translate as follows, "What (the flock that) my Father has given to me is greater (more excellent) (than all other creatures on earth), and no one is able to snatch (them, that is the flock) out of the hand of the Father!" What God the Father has given to Jesus Christ is the flock consisting of believers from every nation. These believers are the most important of God's creatures on earth. These believers together form the one flock, the one Church of Christ in the world, the one kingdom of God in the world.

STEP 4. APPLY.

APPLICATIONS

Consider. WHICH TRUTHS IN THIS PASSAGE ARE POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS?

Share and record. Let us brainstorm with one another and record a list of possible applications from John 10:1-42.

Consider. WHICH POSSIBLE APPLICATION DOES GOD WANT YOU TO TURN INTO A PERSONAL APPLICATION?

Record. Write this personal application down in your notebook. Feel free to share your personal application.

(Remember that people in every group will apply different truths or even make different applications of the same truth. The following is a list of possible applications.)

1. Examples of possible applications from John 10:1-42.

- 10:1. Beware of thieves and robbers that come into your congregation via an unbiblical way.
- 10:3. Get to know the Lord Jesus Christ so well that you can recognize his voice and distinguish it from the voice of the thieves and robbers.
- 10:9-10. If you have never entered through the gate, Jesus Christ, then enter and you will be saved forever, you will live safe on earth where nothing can really harm you and you will have a meaningful and satisfying life.
- 10:12. Recognise the hired shepherds or pastors. These religious leaders and teachers do not really care for the sheep and will not lay down their lives for the sheep.
- 10:16. Make your congregation a mission congregation right from the beginning and continually! The Shepherd, Jesus Christ, wants to save people from every language and culture in your area and in the world!
- 10:27. If you are a genuine sheep, you will listen to the voice of Jesus Christ and you will follow Jesus Christ.
- 10:28. Never doubt that the Shepherd, Jesus Christ, promised to you that he has given you everlasting life, that you will never perish and that no one is able to snatch you out of his hand!

- 10:29. Never doubt that the Shepherd, Jesus Christ, promised that his flock of sheep is greater (or more excellent) than all (other creatures on earth), and that no one is able to snatch (it) this flock out of the hand of God the Father!
- 10:30-39. Never doubt that Jesus Christ claims that he and God the Father are one divine nature; that he is God that has taken on the human nature; and that God the Father is in God the Son and that God the Son is in God the Father. The Jews clearly understood this meaning; otherwise they would not have accused him of blasphemy and would not have tried to stone him to death.

2. Examples of personal applications John 10:1-42.

I want to memorise John 10:28 so that I will not forget that Jesus has promised assurance of salvation for me and for all people who believe in him. Jesus promised, “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand”.

I want to submit my mind to the fact that Jesus Christ is equal with God in his inner essence, in his work and in honour. Because God is infinitely greater than any human being, no human being can define the nature of God. The only thing we humans can do is to believe everything that God himself has revealed about his own nature to us. God has revealed that he is one in substance and distinguishable in three persons, namely, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. I believe that and I will confess that everywhere!

STEP 5. PRAY.	RESPONSE
LET US TAKE TURNS TO PRAY ABOUT ONE TRUTH THAT GOD HAS TAUGHT US in John 10:1-42. (Respond in your prayer to what you have learned during this Bible study. Practise to pray only in one or two sentences. Remember that people in every group will pray about different issues.)	

5	PRAYER (8 minutes)	[INTERCESSION] PRAY FOR OTHERS
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Continue to pray in groups of two’s or three’s. Pray with one another for one another and for the people in the world (Romans 15:30; Colossians 4:12).

6	PREPARATION (2 minutes)	[ASSIGNMENT] FOR NEXT LESSON
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(Group leader. Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. Commitment. Be committed to make disciples and build Christ’s Church.
2. Preach, teach or study the Bible study of John 10 together with another person or group of people.
3. Personal time with God. Have a quiet time from half a chapter of **Luke 1:1 – 4:30** each day. Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
4. Memorisation. Meditate and memorise the new Bible verse (series G). (1) Leave and cleave: **Genesis 2:24**. Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
5. Prayer. Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
6. Update your notebook on building Christ’s Church. Include your notes on personal time with God, your memorisation notes, your Bible study notes and this preparation.