

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series you may learn how to build up the Christian Church. Two teachers will do Bible study together from John 10:1-42. We will use “the five steps” method of Bible study. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. You may join our Bible study every week by preparing for the next Bible study. You may also gather a few people around you and use this method of studying the Bible together. Doing Bible study together with a few other Christians is one of the best ways to grow to maturity as a Christian.

(S) **STEP 1. READ**

Let us read John 10:1-42 together. When you are two or more people, take turns to read one verse each until you have completed the reading. Due to shortage of time, please read John chapter 10 for yourself.

(T) **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in John 10:1-42. “Which truth in this passage is important for you?” or “Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?” Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(S) An important truth for me is in John 10:26-29 about the assurance of salvation.

First. 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 sovereignly promises three absolute certainties concerning those people who are *his sheep*: True believers already now possess eternal life, that is, *the life which 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 ever-lasting 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 and obey Christ!

Second. 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. In verse 26, the Jews alone are fully responsible for their sin of unbelief! He says, “You do not believe!” *This is human responsibility!* But in verse 29, Jesus says, “The Father who has given the sheep to me ...” On the other hand, *God the Father chooses whom he gives to Jesus* and whom he does not give to Jesus. 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 believe in him! *This is divine predestination!* 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!

(T) An important truth for me is from John 10:30-33 about the fact that Jesus Christ is God.

First. 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 which they do. He definitely refers to the fact that they are one in their inner essence. When he says “we are”, he is speaking of *two Persons*. And when he says “one”, he is speaking of *one substance*. Jesus teaches that God the Father and God the Son are two Persons, but form one substance. Although the Bible does not use the word “Trinity”, it very clearly teaches the doctrine of the Trinity, namely that the God of the Bible revealed himself as *one God in substance*, distinguishable as *one God in three Persons*. This verse is very important, because it rejects the

wrong doctrine that denies the *unity of essence* of God (Arminian) and it rejects the wrong doctrine that denies the *diversity of three Persons* in God (Sabellian).

Second. The Jews understood that Jesus claimed that he was 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, "Before Abraham was born, I am!" The Jews understood this as blasphemy, because they picked up stones to stone him. In John 10:33, the Jews understood very well that Jesus affirmed his absolute equality with God in heaven, because they again regarded his statement as blasphemy. Therefore, in John 8:24, Jesus warns the Jews, "If you do not believe that *I am the one I claim to be*, you will indeed die in your sins!" It is not enough to believe that Jesus Christ was just a good man or even a prophet. No, *unless people believe that Jesus is everything he claimed to be, they will certainly die in their sins*. That is, they will certainly go to hell! It is absolutely essential to believe that Jesus Christ is absolutely equal to God the Father. Jesus Christ is the visible expression of the invisible God. He is God who enters his creation and our history.

(S) STEP 3. QUESTION

Let us try to understand all the truths in John 10:1-42 and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. "Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask to the group?" Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

1st Question. (10:1-16). How do shepherds function in Israel?

(T) 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 to grass and water. 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, sometimes even by name. The shepherd loved his sheep and would defend them against wolves and even against lions and bears, as king David did.

2nd Question. This story is an allegory. What is an allegory?

(S) *An allegory* is an extended metaphor. A *metaphor* is an implied comparison. For example, "The Lord is my shepherd" (Psalm 23:1). 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, 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 according to verse 16 to Israel. *The sheep* are not all people in Israel and also not all people in the world. They 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; those who follow Jesus Christ. *The one flock* refers according to verse 16 to the whole group of saved people in the world. 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 interpret them. The main idea should be grasped.

3rd Question. What is the meaning of the allegory about the good shepherd?

(T) In John 10, the main theme is the good shepherd, Jesus, who is contrasted with the evil shepherds, the Pharisees.

Jesus is the true and perfect shepherd. He entered by the way which God predicted in the Old Testament. He knows every true believer by name. Moreover, the believers know Jesus as their true shepherd and will only follow him. Jesus led by example, by walking in the front.

However, the Pharisees were like thieves and robbers. They avoided the door, Jesus Christ, and were trying to control the people of Israel through intimidation. They threatened to exclude everyone who did not do what they said. They did not *lead* the people of Israel, but *drove* them on with threats. True believers would run away from them. Like a true shepherd, Jesus laid down his life for believers on the cross. But the Pharisees destroyed true spiritual life.

Jesus is the shepherd of this sheep-pen, namely the believers in Israel, as well as the shepherd of many other sheep-pens in the world. He leads his sheep from every nation out of their original sheep-pens and forms one new flock. Both Jewish and Gentile believers form one Church in the whole world.

4th Question. What is the main lesson of this allegory?

(S) This allegory teaches us how important it is to enter through the gate, Jesus, into the community of believers. It teaches us to know Jesus Christ personally and intimately. It teaches us to follow Jesus and obey his voice. Only when we follow close behind Jesus Christ, 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, but only one flock of believers in the whole world, namely the Christian Church or the kingdom of Christ.

5th Question. (10:10) Why is Jesus compared to a door (gate) and also to a shepherd?

(T) The symbol of Jesus as *the door* only explains or amplifies the symbol of Jesus as *the good shepherd*. When Jesus says in verse 7, “I am the door of the sheep” he claims to be the only One through whom people obtain legitimate access. There is simply no other entrance! Jesus Christ is both the door *to* the sheep and the door *for* the sheep. In verse 8, he claims that he is for true shepherds 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. In verse 9, he claims that he is for the sheep the only way through which they can obtain salvation and pasture.

6th Question. (10:9) What does Jesus mean when he says that whoever enters through him will be saved?

(S) 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, will never perish and nobody can snatch them out of his hand. Therefore, the meaning here 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, power and pollution of sin and from eternal condemnation. They will receive eternal life. Secondly, they will also *dwell safely* in the presence of their shepherd, Jesus Christ. Nothing that happens to them can really harm them. They will experience his daily care and protection. They will find abundant blessings in his pasture.

7th Question. (10:10) Does Jesus die for everyone in the world or only for his sheep?

(T) John 10:11 says, “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 whom he lays down his life? According to verse 27-28, they are those who listen to his voice and follow him. They are those who receive eternal life and will never perish! Therefore, the atoning death of Jesus Christ is limited to those who are actually saved. Jesus only dies for those he effectively saves. God’s salvation work through Jesus Christ cannot be thwarted by the decision or effort of any human being. His salvation work is sovereign and always effective. To summarise: While the atoning death of Jesus Christ 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 will respond by faith. While God draws his people from all nations that exist in the world, not all people of all nations will be saved.

8th Question. (10:16) What does Jesus mean when he says that he must bring other sheep from other sheep-pens to form one flock?

(S) One. Jesus gathers his sheep out of Israel and the other nations into his Church or kingdom.
It is clear from the whole story and especially verse 16 that *the sheep-pen* refers to Israel. Jesus is bringing his sheep out of this sheep-pen into his own flock. Up to this time, God let the nations go their own way (Acts 14:16) and Jesus concentrated his work in Israel. Now a new era is dawning. Jesus has many other sheep that do not belong to Israel, but to the other nations in the world. He must also bring them out of their sheep-pens into his one flock, the Church or kingdom.

Two. Believers from all the other nations will enter into the kingdom on the basis of equality with the Jews.
The Old Testament prophesied that God would extend his work of salvation to all the nations in the world. In Genesis 12:3, God promises 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 predicts that his name would be great among all the nations. But in Isaiah 54:2-3 the presentation was that Israel’s tent would be enlarged so as to have room also for the nations and Micah 4:1-2 said that the nations would come to the mountain of the Lord in Jerusalem.

However, the teaching that *the believers from the nations would enter into the kingdom of God on basis of equality with the believers from Israel*, had not been revealed to the prophets of the Old Testament. That truth was revealed through Jesus and the apostles. 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 people in the Old Testament did not know. Through the preaching of the gospel, God was going to make the Gentile believers heirs together with Israel and members together of one body and sharers together in the promise in Christ. Note, in John 10:16, 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 the sheep-pen of Israel and he gathers them and his sheep out of all the other Gentile nations into his one and only *flock*, the Church or kingdom!

9th Question. (10:29) What is the correct translation of John 10:29?

(T) The original does not have the word “them”, referring to the sheep. And 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 my Father has given me is greater or more excellent than all other creatures on earth, and no one is able to snatch this flock out of the hand of the Father!”

(S) **STEP 4 and 5. APPLY and PRAY**

After brainstorming with one another and recording a list of *possible applications*, consider which possible application God wants you to turn into a *personal application*. Then take turns to pray about one truth that God has taught us in John chapter 10.

Dear Father in heaven, thank you that the assurance of my salvation does not depend on my human performance, but on your promise and power, with which you hold me in your hand!

(T) Dear Father in heaven, I submit my mind to you and to your revelation of yourself. I commit myself to believe everything that you have revealed to me in the Bible. In Jesus’ name, amen!

(S) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Make a commitment to do Bible study every week. Prepare next week’s Bible study. Use “the five steps” method to prepare John chapter 11.

Second. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. See the workbooks “Go and build Christ’s Church” and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to “Discipleship training on the air”.