Lesson 10
John 10:1-42
The Good Shepherd and His sheep

Memory verse: "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 will snatch them out of my hand." (John 10:27-28 NIV)

John 10 focuses on the image of sheep, sheepfolds, and shepherds. It is a rural and Eastern image, to be sure, but it is an image that can say a great deal to us today, even in our urban industrialized world. Paul used this image when admonishing the spiritual leaders in the church at Ephesus (Acts 20:28ff.). The truths that cluster around the image of the shepherd and the sheep are found throughout the Bible, and they are important to us today. The symbols that Jesus used help us understand who He is and what He wants to do for us.

Evidently the teaching in this chapter followed what John recorded in chapter 9 (v. 21), but exactly when between the Feast of Tabernacles (7:2, 14, 37) and the Feast of Dedication (v. 22) it happened, is unclear. The place where Jesus gave it appears to have been Jerusalem (v. 21). Probably this teaching followed the preceding one immediately. The thematic as well as the linguistic connections are strong. The blind beggar had just been put out of the fold of his synagogue (9:34), so Jesus spoke of His fold, which the beggar had now entered (cf. 9:35-38)

Jesus evidently chose the figure of a "good shepherd" to contrast Himself with the bad shepherds who were misleading God's sheep. Many Old Testament passages castigated Israel's shepherds who failed in their duty (cf. Isa. 56:9-12; Jer. 23:1-4; 25:32-38; Ezek. 34; Zech. 11). God was Israel's Shepherd (cf. Ps. 23:1; 80:1; Isa. 40:10-11). The shepherd metaphor also was a good one to picture Jesus' voluntary self-sacrifice for His people.

This teaching is quite similar to what the Synoptic evangelists recorded Jesus giving in His parables, but there is a significant difference. John called this teaching a figure of speech (Gr. paroimian) rather than a parable (Gr. parabole). Parables generally stress only one or a few points of comparison, but the sustained metaphors that follow develop many similarities. John did not include any Synoptic-style parables in his narrative.

Perhaps the easiest way to approach this somewhat complex chapter of John's gospel is to note the three declarations that Jesus made about Himself.

Have you responded personally to our Lord's great declarations recorded in this chapter?

He is the Door. Have you "entered in" by faith so that you are saved?

He is the Good Shepherd. Have you heard His voice and trusted Him? After all, He laid down His life for you!

He is the Son of God. Do you believe that? Have you given yourself to Him and received eternal life?

Remember His stern warning: "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24).

Scripture Reading: John 10:7-18; 25-38.
To learn in this lesson: 1) Jesus is the Door   2) Jesus is the Good Shepherd 3) Jesus' Sonship explained.

Discussion Questions:

1)   Jesus declares that "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture." Discuss the context in found verse 1 to 10 that led to His statement for the Jews then and still is available to anyone today

2)   Jesus calls Himself the Good Shepherd. Find out more about what He does in verses 11 to 21.

3)   Jesus' third declaration about Himself in chapter 10 was the most startling of all. What was it and how did Jesus explained His relationship with His Father and His sheep in verses 22 to 42?