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WHAT DOES “I AM THE DOOR” MEAN?

To answer this question, we need to look at John 10 and the culture and context of the day.

The text is about sheep and a shepherd. The Jews knew and understood sheep because they were very important for food, milk, clothing and sacrifices in their daily lives. There is a long history with sheep, shepherds and the Jewish people. Here are a few facts;

- Sheep are one of the most *helpless* animals known to man.
- They keep their heads down and graze all day, often *becoming lost*.
- By nature, sheep are followers. If *the lead* sheep steps off a cliff, the others will follow.
- Sheep are vulnerable to injury and are completely helpless against predators.
- They carry so much wool on their bodies and have proportionately small feet that they will drown in moving water or deep water.

John 10:1-10 (NIV) “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.

Understanding the key parts of the text:

- a sheep pen
- a gate or door
- a shepherd
- a gatekeeper or watchman
- a thief

John 10:1-5 (NIV) “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.”

We see Jesus making a number of comparisons:

- The sheep pen represents the Kingdom of God and Jesus is contrasting Himself from the Pharisees.
- Jesus compares the Pharisees with thieves and robbers.
- Jesus criticizes the Pharisees for their selfish, controlling behavior, getting in the way of sacrificially helping the people.
- Jesus then describes what *the real “Shepherd will look like.”*
- Verse 3 - ‘the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out’

The sheep know the shepherds voice

This entire story gives us a picture of our need to follow Jesus and His provision for us as we follow Him.

- Do you know the voice of the Lord?
- Do you listen to Him speak and obey Him?
- Do you believe God is too distant to hear?
- What are the strange voices that are dangerous to you? Internal or external?

John 10:7-10 (NIV) 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.

Why Jesus is the door or gate

- The shepherds became the actual gate or door for protection and safety.

John 15:13 (NIV) Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.

- The door is the entry point to the fold or flock of God. Jesus is that door representing salvation, care, protection and sacrificial love.

John 10:9 (NIV) I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture.

- Jesus called himself, "*The Door*," not "*a door*."
- Jesus made it clear that for anyone trying to get into the Kingdom of Heaven, all other ways are false paths.
- *Whoever* is important - it implies "anyone" who exercises free will and humbly enters through Jesus, will be saved.

Matthew 7:13-14 (NIV) "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

- *Jesus was an open door and is an open door for you today!*

For Small Group Discussion: Did you hear anything new or challenging in this weeks' message?

Opening Question: What door (literally or figuratively) do you regret entering?

Main Point: Jesus protects His followers as shepherds protect their flocks from predators.

Main Scripture: John 10:1-10 (Additional Scripture: Revelation 3:20, John 14:6)

Questions:

1. What does it mean to "enter through" Jesus?
2. We are told that the audience did not understand Jesus' message. What do you think He was trying to communicate?
3. What are some ways that the enemy has tried to "kill, steal, and destroy" in your life or in your family?
4. A gate is meant to keep things safe. How does Jesus protect you, or how has He in the past?
5. Who's voice are you listening to? How do you know it's the right voice?
6. What does it look like for you to have abundant life? How can you grow in expressing abundant life?
7. Are you resisting coming through the door into abundant life? (Phil 3:8-9)
8. Jesus says "I am the way, the truth and the life." If you have not become one of God's sheep, what are you waiting for? What is in the way?

Tips and Resources: *The Way of the Shepherd* by Dr. Kevin Leman