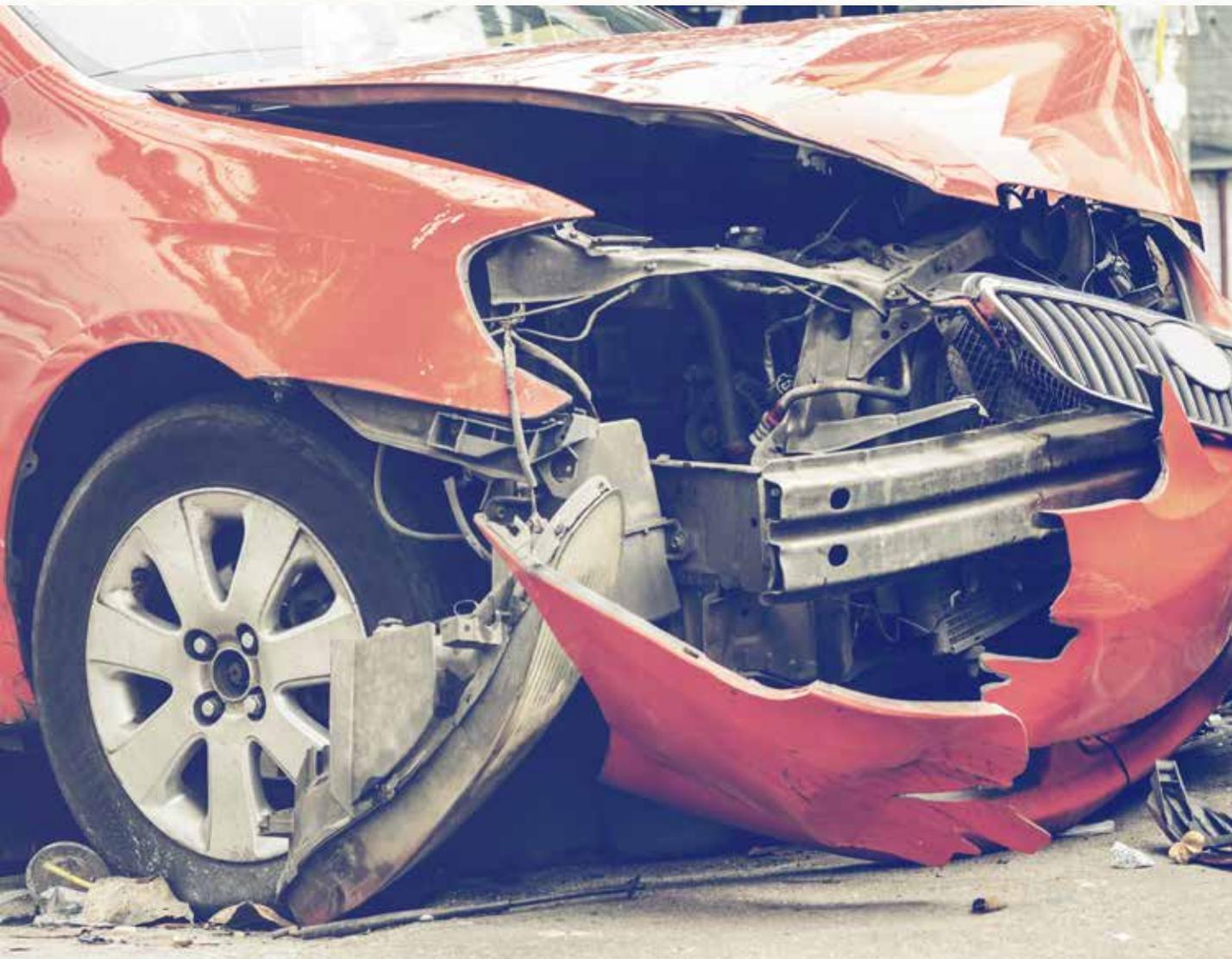


SESSION 3
**OUR NEED FOR
PROTECTION**



When have you felt protected during a strange or scary situation?

QUESTION #1

#BSFlenough

THE POINT

Jesus is the only One who offers us ultimate protection.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Several years ago, while traveling in a major city, our family was using the subway on an especially crowded day. When the train arrived at our station, my wife and I surged ahead with the crowd, moving two of our children forward. We each thought the other was holding our youngest son's hand, but as the train began moving, we saw him standing in the boarding area. Alone.

We panicked. We jumped off the train at the next stop and grabbed the first train headed back in the other direction. We prayed the whole way, trying to hold back the tears, fearful of what might happen to a little boy left all alone. We arrived to find our son still standing there on the platform, wide-eyed and wondering where we had gone. In the end, all was well.

We all know the feeling of vulnerability is disconcerting, to say the least. Jesus knows life can be overwhelming, but He has not left us alone. He protects us and assures our ultimate safety with Him.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

John 10:7-15,27-30 (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.

11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. **12** The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. **13** The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

14 “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— **15** just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.

27 “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. **28** I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. **29** My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. **30** I and the Father are one.”

The gate for the sheep

(v. 7)—A shepherd corralled sheep into makeshift pens at night for protection, forming a door with a bundle of sticks or his own person.

To the full (v. 10)—The Greek word carries the connotation of super abundant or exceedingly abundant, well beyond the minimum. It can refer to both quality and quantity.



John 10:7-10

When Jesus announced, “I am the gate for the sheep” (v. 7), He meant He was the *only* door for the sheep. He was claiming an exclusive status as Savior of the world—a claim that is repeated throughout the New Testament (see John 14:6 and Acts 4:12). While some chafe at this claim and try to soften it, there are no alternative meanings for Jesus’ words. Jesus is not *one* way to God, He is *the only* way.

Jesus based His illustration on a sheep pen with a gate, not a closed room with a door (as our culture would think of a door). The only way to legitimately enter a sheep pen is through the door or gate. Since the sheep pen symbolizes a relationship with God, it follows that Jesus, the Gate, is the only way to enter that relationship. Trusting in anything else—good works, religious tradition, the faith of others, and so on—will not give you access to a relationship with God. You must trust in Jesus alone.

Jesus warned about people who would distract His sheep from following Him. He said, “All who have come before me are thieves and robbers” (v. 8). Jesus was referring to religious leaders, such as the Pharisees and Sadducees, who were more interested in personal gain than in leading people to God. In very strong language, Jesus condemned anyone who interferes with people coming to Him.

Yet Jesus’ words were not all negative. He also gave two wonderful promises:

- ▶ Anyone who follows Christ “will come in and go out, and find pasture” (v. 9).
- ▶ “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (v. 10).

Jesus’ followers move freely through life enjoying His blessings. We are promised abundant life—the opportunity to live life to the fullest.

Modern advertisers promise you can “have it all,” but they lie. You can never get what you need through the products they advertise. Jesus promised you would have everything you need in life for true contentment and fulfillment—but only in Him. Jesus has given you more than you deserve and all of what truly matters in life.

Where do we encounter “thieves and robbers” in today’s world?

QUESTION #2

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Read Psalm 23, below. In the space to the right, record at least one insight this psalm teaches you about God's character and care for His people.

***¹ The LORD is my shepherd,
I lack nothing.***

***² He makes me lie down
in green pastures,
he leads me beside
quiet waters,***

***³ he refreshes my soul.
He guides me along the right
paths for his name's sake.***

***⁴ Even though I walk through
the darkest valley,
I will fear no evil, for
you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.***

***⁵ You prepare a table
before me in the presence
of my enemies.
You anoint my head with
oil; my cup overflows.***

***⁶ Surely your goodness
and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house
of the LORD forever.***



John 10:11-13

Jesus made another significant “I am” statement in verse 11: “I am the good shepherd.” Every shepherd does good for his sheep—leading them to pastures, protecting them from predators, tending to them when they’re sick, and so forth. Jesus’ listeners would have expected this, but He claimed much more. He described the good shepherd as one who “lays down His life for the sheep” (v. 11). Jesus does more than care for His sheep; He died for them.

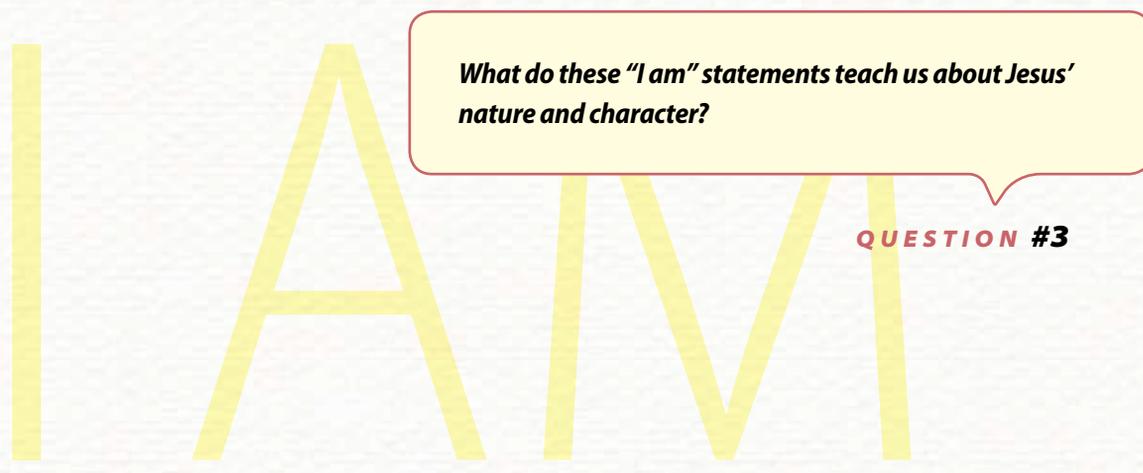
Unfortunately, Jesus also highlighted two kinds of enemies who can limit people from establishing a relationship with God:

- 1. The hired hand.** Since he doesn’t own the sheep, the hired man leaves them and runs away when trouble comes.
- 2. The wolf.** The wolf “attacks and scatters” the sheep as an intentional act of destruction.

One enemy abandons the sheep when trouble comes; the other is the trouble. The Pharisees who heard these words likely cringed at the comparison. Jesus earlier had compared them to “thieves and robbers” (v. 8), and now to hirelings and wolves. Jesus minced no words in describing the damage religious leaders do when they are more concerned about preserving their traditions than introducing people to Christ.

Jesus’ condemnation extends to any person—even a simple church member—who puts religious traditions and preferences ahead of helping people find their way to Him. It’s easy to lose spiritual focus and think the church exists to meet our needs. It’s dangerous to think our ways of doing things are the only acceptable choices and our preferences are best for everyone.

That’s what the Pharisees did, and it can happen to us as well.



What do these “I am” statements teach us about Jesus’ nature and character?

QUESTION #3

What makes Christians question their security in Christ?

QUESTION #4

John 10:14-15,27-30

Jesus' care for His people (His sheep) is comprehensive and irrevocable. He promised that when He gives eternal life, His followers "shall never perish" (v. 28). He used a two-fisted example to demonstrate what He meant. Jesus said of His followers, "No one will snatch them out of my hand" (v. 28) and "No one can snatch them out of my Father's hand" (v. 29).

As a young Christian, the fact that Jesus held me securely was difficult for me to believe. My mistake was assuming my efforts secured my relationship with God. While talking with a youth pastor and another friend about this, the pastor took off his wedding ring and handed it to my friend. He told him to make a fist around the ring and then wrap his free hand around his fist. Then the pastor put both his hands around my friend's hands. My youth pastor turned to me and said, "Try to get the wedding ring out of our hands."

Obviously, I couldn't do it. Then he said: "Jeff, Jesus has hold of you. God has hold of Jesus. You are completely secure. You are like the wedding ring; nothing can get to you."

That illustration isn't perfect, but it has stuck with me over the years. We are far more secure than that wedding ring. Once you establish a relationship with Jesus through faith, you belong to Him completely and permanently. No attack can defeat you, no sin can disqualify you, and no person can steal you away from Christ (see Rom. 8:31-39).



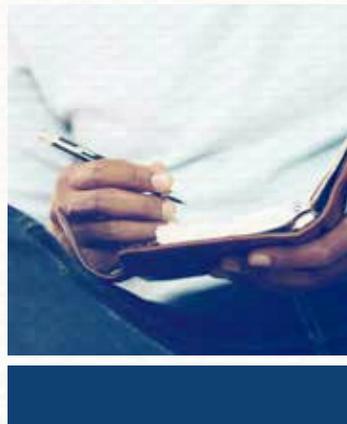
***What's our role
in accessing and
benefiting from
Jesus' protection?***

QUESTION #5

LIVE IT OUT

How will you respond this week to the offer of Jesus' protection?
Consider the following options:

- ▶ **Identify your fears.** Be especially aware this week of circumstances that cause you to experience fear or concern. Record those moments in a journal or list, and use them as a starting point for prayer.
- ▶ **Study Christ.** Read more about the relationship between Jesus and the Father. See page 61 for a short description of what we know about God, and invest time in reading the Scriptures provided.
- ▶ **Share what you've learned.** Be intentional about sharing how Jesus has calmed your fears with someone who needs to hear it this week. Pray that God would provide opportunities and conversations that open the door for you to share what you've learned.



When fear arises, remember your security is in Jesus. He and the Father have you in a double-fisted handful of protective custody. Nothing can pluck you from Their hands!

My thoughts