

A Deeper Walk with God

The Shepherd and His Sheep

Edited Transcript

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All right, so let's jump here. We're in our series here, **A Deeper Walk With God**.

And you know, we do shout outs every week, and I think sometimes when you do something over and over again, you just sort of get into the routine of it and you never explain why you're doing it, and maybe we did a long time ago. So I just wanted to explain the shout outs so, we do shout outs every week to two different people.

We do a shout out to an area director. An area director is a Man in the Mirror employee who is coaching and consulting with churches and leaders around the country to help those churches, those leaders, develop a discipleship pathway for every man in their church. Okay? So, what do we do? We help churches develop effective men's ministries.

And these are all guys, there's 90 of them today, as I speak, there's about 90 of these guys around the country, and they have a team of partners who support them financially so that they don't charge the church, or the leaders, for the service that they're providing. But each of these guys is out there, they work out of their house predominantly, or out of the table that they've claimed at Starbucks as their office sometimes, or Panera.

But these guys are out there, they are doing it every day. They are like missionaries into churches in their local community.

And then the other guy that we do a shout out to is a Video Bible Study leader. So you all know that we have the Bible study online. If you're watching right now, you got it online, maybe somebody else downloaded it for you to watch it, but we get these Bible studies posted online.

We have, as far as we know, and I'd be happy to be wrong, but as far as we know we have the largest online men's Video Bible Study library that there is. So, we've been recording these for like 15 years now. 15 times 50 is 750, so there's something like 700, 750 Bible studies that we've recorded, and we've created this online archive.

I'll tell you a funny story really quick. When we first posted the video, Bible Study Online, after like a year or two, we got a phone call from the internet provider that was servicing the video. And they said, "Um, we're really concerned about your video and we just need you to know that we do not allow pornography on our servers." And we said, "What? What are you talking about?" "Well, you know, Man in the Mirror, and it's video and there's a ton ... I mean we don't have anything else that has the kind of traffic that you guys are generating, the amount of video that's going." And we're like, "It's Bible studies, right?" "Right." We're like, "Guys, go watch them. They are video Bible studies." And they're like, "Oh, wow! That's pretty cool!" So, we're not porn, of any type. That's great.

So, maninthemirror.org/biblestudy is the place that you go and that will direct you to our online Bible study archives. The latest Bible study is always at the top. So if you are here live, and you missed one, it runs on a two week delay, you can always go find that. If you are out watching the Bible study with a group of guys right now, or in here, and you've got another group of guys, and you're looking for material, and you like this, well, you can go back, all the series are listed by series, and you can find them there. And we'd love to have do that.

It's also podcasts, so again, if you are with a group at home, at your church, and you miss a week, if they were able to watch it, you can also listen to it on the podcast and catch up with your group as you're doing that. All right?

So, let's look at the two guys. Dave Armstrong is the area director that we're giving a shout out to. Dave is the area director for Pennsylvania, the greater Philadelphia north. Dave's a fascinating guy, he was a pastor, and he fell away from his faith. Dave says, "When I fell away from Christ 20 years ago, I also failed as a man, a husband, a father, and yes, even as a pastor. God, in his grace, brought me back to himself, and I experienced the forgiveness and restoration that comes from the Lord. I want men to know the same transformed heart that God has given me. When you disciple a man, it really does change everything."

So, Dave's an inspiration to all of us. If you're in the Philadelphia north area, you can reach Dave at davearmstrong@maninthemirror.org. And if you want to find out more about the area directors, these 90 guys around the country, even if that's something that interests you, maybe you could be an area director and help local churches, you can go to maninthemirror.org/areadirectors and find out more information about that. And we'd love to have that.

So, on three, let's give a hearty shout for Dave. We're going to yell, "Hey, Dave!" on three. You ready? One, two, three, hey, Dave! All right.

And then, Lee Cooper runs a ministry of a small group of guys called Leesville Men and they're in Raleigh, North Carolina. So I don't know why Leesville Men meet in Raleigh, unless they're Lee's men, right? But the Leesville Men are a group of eight guys who meet Thursday evenings at 7:30 pm at the Leesville ... oh, Leesville Baptist Church. Just read the notes, Brett, that's all. And they use the Video Bible Study.

We always ask the Bible studies for a statement about their group. So he said, "The Leesville Men group seeks to cultivate openness in learning how God can help us grow daily." So, let's give Lee a hey. "Hey, Lee," on three. One, two, three, hey, Lee! All right.

So, we're talking about this week a shepherd and his sheep. This is the third session that we've done on A Deeper Walk With God. Pat sort of did an overview of this series at the beginning, talking about A Deeper Walk With God. And then, last week he talked about the Father. And today we're going to talk about the Son, we're going to talk about having a deeper walk with Jesus.

The title of this is, **The Shepherd and His Sheep**. The Shepherd and His Sheep. And so, what we're going to talk about is, first of all, the centrality of Christ. The centrality of Christ in our faith. Secondly, we'll talk about Jesus as shepherd. And then we're going to talk about how does this apply to us? So, I'm a shepherd too, you're a shepherd too. And we'll talk about what we learned from Jesus as shepherd that impacts us as shepherd.

THE CENTRALITY OF CHRIST

So, we'll start here with the centrality of Christ. Ravi Zacharias wrote a blog post a while back about this topic. And he told a story. He said Paul Tillich, the noted existential theologian, traveled to Asia to hold conferences with various Buddhist thinkers. He was studying the significance of religious leaders to the movements that had engendered.

Tillich asked a simple question, "What if by some fluke the Buddha had never lived and turned out to be some sort of fabrication? What would the implications be for Buddhism?" Now, mind you, Tillich was concerned with the indispensability of the Buddha, not his authenticity. All right? So, this isn't about whether Buddhism is the right or wrong religion, it's just what would Buddhism be without Buddha? What if it just came out that somebody created, invented the Buddha so that they could just get all these teachings out there and just attribute it to someone?

The Buddhist scholars did not hesitate to answer. "If the Buddha was a myth," they said, "it did not matter at all." Why? "Because Buddhism should be judged as an abstract philosophy," they said, "as a system of living. Whether its concept originated with the Buddha is irrelevant." "As an aside," Ravi says, "I think the Buddha himself would have concurred. Knowing that his death was imminent, he beseeched his followers not to focus on him, but to remember his teachings. Not his life, but his way of life was to be attended to and propagated."

So what of other world religions? Hinduism, as a conglomeration of thinkers and philosophies and gods, can certainly do without many of its deities. Some other major religions face the same predicament. So here's the question, is Christianity similar? Could God the Father have sent another instead of Jesus? "May I say to you," Ravi says, "and please hear me, that the answer is most categorically no. Jesus did not merely claim to be a prophet in a continuum of prophets. He is the unique Son of God, part of the very godhead that Christianity calls the Trinity."

I know Pat put up a little picture last week of an illustration of the trinity. It's actually a pretty famous illustration. I'm sorry he used a Wikipedia link, because it makes it feel like somebody just made it up and posted it on Wikipedia. That illustration has been up for a long time, but the illustration shows how we believe that our God exists as a trinity.

This is a very difficult concept to really wrap your mind around. And to me, that's actually reassuring. I like having a God that's a little bit tough to understand. Like, if I could completely comprehend God, it wouldn't be much of a God. All right? Just be somebody maybe a little better than me, but certainly not a God if I could understand him easily.

So, we have a God who has three persons within the God. Each of them are God, but they are separate and distinct from each other. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Spirit is God. But the Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Spirit, and the Spirit is not the Father. They are distinct persons within the godhead. Are you confused? Me too. It's okay. It's one of those, I don't know about you guys, but I have some of these things that I feel like I'm right up to the edge of understanding and then I think just a little too hard and it all goes away. You know?

The trinity's like that. But the trinity has been understood to be the best way to explain who God is as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is not an invention that people created to try to explain the scriptures. The scriptures very clearly talk about God in these three persons, although the word trinity is not in the

Bible, it very clearly talks about God in these three persons. And so, in the early, early church they understood this and they used this concept of the trinity to help us understand it as well.

So, we're talking about the second person of the trinity. You cannot have, though, Christianity without Christ. Okay? You can have Buddhism without Buddha, but you can't have Christianity without Christ. And Paul puts it this way, if you have a Bible, turn to Colossians 1, Colossians 1. And I normally use the ESV, but I'm going to use the New Living today just because it puts this passage beautifully.

So, Colossians 1:15 says this, "Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation. For through him, God created everything, in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see, such as thrones and kingdoms, rulers and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him. He existed before anything else and he holds all creation together. Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body. He is the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead. So, he is first in everything. For God, in all his fullness, was pleased to live in Christ. And through him, God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross. This includes you."

He's saying this to the Colossians, but he's saying to us. This includes you. So, you have to have Christ in Christianity for some pretty basic reasons, according to Paul. For one thing, he created everything. No Christ, no creation. He created everything.

What else do you not have if you don't have Christ? Well, he created authorities. If you don't have Christ, nothing holds together. Paul says Jesus actually holds the universe together. Jesus is, in a sense, physics. Right? He holds the earth together. If Jesus were to stop doing that, we would disappear in an instant. We would cease to be.

Without Jesus, you don't have the church. He is the head of the church. You could have a group of people, I guess, that follow some nice teachings. Sort of the, you know, Jesus was a great hippie peace dude, right? So we're going to all follow that, but it's not the church. It's not the church, it has no power.

Without Jesus you have no resurrection. And without the resurrection you have no reconciliation. And ultimately, without Jesus you have no peace. Christ is the central figure in our faith. Without Christ, Christianity is meaningless, it's meaningless.

So we must ... this is the centrality of Jesus. And if you look in John 14, Jesus says the same thing. He's having a little discussion with the disciples and he says, "Hey, I am going ahead and I'm going to prepare a place for us. In my Father's house, my Father's mansion, there's many rooms. If it wouldn't true I wouldn't have said it." And so, Thomas says, "We don't know how to get there. Can you tell us how to get there?" He says, "Show us the way."

And what does Jesus say? "I am the way. I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life. It's really, really tough to get to the Father if you don't have me." Right? No, no, no, it's not really tough, "No man goes to the Father but through me. No man." Jesus is the central character in the faith that we have. Paul said, "When I came to you," he says to one of the churches he was writing letter to them. He said, "When I came to you," Paul was a super intelligent guy, right? Educated in the best religious schools he could be. And he says, "I resolve to teach you nothing but Christ and him crucified."

So, Jesus is the central figure. Jesus is God. He is the Son of the Father. He sends the Spirit to us. But Jesus is the central figure in Christianity. Without Jesus, you don't have Christianity. You have a false religion that is powerless, that is peaceless, that is churchless, that doesn't explain how the world works.

So, Jesus is central, all right? I'm sorry, these are the verses we talked about, Colossians 1:15-19, and then John 14 and those verses, 6, 8, and 11 talk about Jesus' centrality.

JESUS AS SHEPHERD

So, let's look then at Jesus as Shepherd. What's the most famous passage about Jesus being a shepherd? That I just put up on the screen? Psalm 23, right? How many of you had to memorize this? Did you ever have to memorize this as a kid? Maybe for, like if you were in Boy's Brigade, or in your Sunday school class you had to memorize Psalm 23.

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." Now, here's the problem with this passage, it gets thrown around too much, it just gets blasted out there. It's like a mantra almost, we just repeat the words and we don't really think about them any more. So, what I want you to do is I want you to take a deep breath and I want you to close your eyes, and I just want you to listen to this passage.

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Now, not only do we know this passage, but when Jesus was teaching in the synagogues and in the temple, and as he toured around Galilee and around Judea, the people that he was speaking with, they were equally familiar with this passage.

David says, "The Lord is my shepherd." And Jesus says, "I am the shepherd." When he says that, he's not just saying a metaphor, "Hey, I'm a shepherd! Woo hoo!" He's saying, "I am the good shepherd." And when he said that, the people would go, "Wait, wait, wait, you mean the dude that leads us beside still waters? The guy that walks me through the valleys of the shadow of death? The guy that anoints my head with oil? That guy? You're that guy? Because David said that was God." Right. Exactly. Now you're getting it. Okay?

So, I've turned to John 10, and we'll see how Jesus uses this as he's talking to the disciples. He says, "Truly I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him, the gatekeeper opens."

Listen to this, "The sheep hear his voice and he calls his own sheep by name and he leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

So, what seems to be happening here is you've got a sheepfold, sort of like the livery stable in the old westerns, right? The sheepfold, and so all the shepherds, you don't want sheep running around, okay? They're gross. Come on, wake up, like they poop everywhere, okay? And so, you put all the sheep in a big sheepfold, a big fenced in area, and I don't know about you, but all sheep look pretty much the same to me. There's like black ones and white ones, I don't know, I mean, spotted ones. There's no striped ones, right? That would be like a zebra.

So, you've got all these sheep, they all mingle. They are doing sheep things, I guess. The shepherd has to go and get his sheep. And interestingly enough, sheep aren't as dumb as you think they are, when the shepherd calls them, the sheep that know his voice will follow him out of the sheepfold. And the sheep that don't know his voice won't come. Isn't that fascinating?

And so, what Jesus says is, "My sheep know my voice." And if you go down, he says ... they didn't get it, by the way, this is another case of the disciples missing the point. Jesus says, verse seven, "Truly, truly I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door, if anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture."

So, the sheep going in through the door, because Jesus is what? The way. Jesus is the way, Jesus is the truth, Jesus is the life, he is the door. It's another way of saying that. "The thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy. I come that they may have life and have it abundantly." And then here he says it, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

"I am the good shepherd. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, he does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing about the sheep. I am the good shepherd, I know my own, and my own know me."

So, this is a great picture of the relationship that Jesus has with us as a shepherd. He knows us, we know him. If you are one of Jesus' sheep, you know his voice. The way you know his voice is because the sheep have been with that shepherd day after day after day. At night, they can hear him around the campfire, trying to keep warm, singing songs or talking to his fellow shepherds.

As he's walking along, it's kind of boring, right? Just trying to find the sheep good pasture. So that sheep heads off into the brush, he's yelling out, "Come on! Come back here!" He'd run over and he's got this crook, right? It's got a hook on the end of the it, so if the sheep gets into some brambles and you don't want to get cut up, or if he falls into a little ditch, you can reach down and use that hook and grab the sheep and pull him out.

And so, the sheep, after spending time with the shepherd, they know the shepherd. They know his voice, they know what he sounds like. They know what he wants them to do. They trust him to lead them and keep them safe.

Do you know your shepherd? Do you know your shepherd? So, this is the metaphor, but it's only slightly a metaphor. All these truths are really there for our relationship with God. And so, our Big Idea is this, **Am I listening for the shepherd's voice?**

When you're in a difficult time and you're trying to figure out what to do, and you can't figure out which way you should go, are you listening for the shepherd's voice? Or are you trying to solve the problem on your own? When you're going through a health crisis and you've got all these options in front of you, and you could choose this treatment or that treatment, and you don't know what to do, are you listening for the shepherd's voice?

When you're in the midst of a relationship struggle, and you can't seem to say the right thing, or you've got somebody in your life that wants nothing to do with you anymore, and they want to get away from you and they want to leave you. And you're overwhelmed by the devastation of rejection and you don't know what to do, and you don't know how to fix it, are you listening for the shepherd's voice?

Because as guys, you know what we like to do? We like to buckle down, right? We like to grit our teeth, and we're going to figure it out on our own. And when anybody asks us how we're doing, we could have just won the lottery, or just had our dog die that we've loved forever, and we give the same answer, "Fine." Right? That's what we do. We want to be self-sufficient. But you know what a self-sufficient sheep is? It's a wolf's meal. That's what a self-sufficient sheep is.

And so, are you listening for the shepherd's voice? Why do you need the shepherd's voice? Because he will show you the way to go. He will help you find the still waters. Peace. He will walk right with you through the valley of the shadow of death, through the difficult times he won't leave you. But you have to listen for his voice and go where he's leading you. And trust him. That's what it means for Jesus to be a shepherd.

I'M A SHEPHERD TOO

But, you know, this metaphor applies to us as men too. We're shepherds too. In fact, we won't go there, but if you look at Ezekiel 34, you can see that metaphor of a shepherd applied to leaders. And honestly, in Ezekiel 34, it's not in a very flattery way that it's applied to leaders. It's talking about how the leaders are horrible shepherds.

In Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:2, in both cases Paul and Peter here are talking to us about, well Luke is writing it, but talking to us about how we are shepherds. So, who are we shepherds for? Well, we're shepherds for our families. We're shepherds for our co-workers, and especially if you run a business, you are a shepherd for the people that work for you. Our job, as shepherds, is to find the one that's lost. Jesus says, "What shepherd, if he had 100 sheep and the 99 were safe and one was unsafe, wouldn't go after the one?" That's what we're supposed to do too, is go after the one. Not write them off.

So, we need to listen for the shepherd's voice. We need to follow him. We need to go where he leads. We need to accept his protection. Even when that crook comes down, can you imagine how uncomfortable it would be for a crook to come down and hook you with this wooden thing and pull you up out of a ditch? I mean, it might be a relief, but it's not going to be comfortable.

Sometimes I think we reject the crook, we're like, "No, I'll just sit here in this ditch. It's nice and comfy here. I don't want that crook, that's going to be uncomfortable." The shepherd's up at the top of a hole, offering you the way out. Maybe reconciling with somebody that you don't really care to reconcile with. It may be swallowing your pride, it may be taking a different job. It may be stepping into somebody's life that's really difficult to deal with. But if the shepherd leads us there, that's where we have to go.

And then, Paul said, "Be imitators of me, as I imitate Christ." And so, if Christ is a shepherd, it's our job to be shepherds too. We all have assignments to be a shepherd. We're all given our own little flock. Part of the bigger flock that is Christ's. So, be a shepherd, imitate Christ. But first of all, make sure that you are listening for the shepherd's voice so that you can go where he leads you.

Let's pray. Oh, Lord Jesus, we want to be part of your flock. You are the perfect shepherd. You are the good shepherd. You take care of your flock, you don't abandon anyone. You know each of us by name, we're not just a mindless mass of buying, we are individual sheep and you love each one of us. You know us by name. You pursue us and you save us. And Lord, we are grateful. Help our hearts, Lord, to be transformed by your love, so that our gratitude can grow. So that our worship can be bigger and more worthy of your greatness. And Lord, we thank you for the Spirit that you sent. We thank you for your obedience to the Father. Lord, we want to be in relationship with you. We want to worship you. We want to bring you glory. Help us to do that, Lord. Help us to listen for your voice every day, every minute. In Jesus' name, Amen.