

***Counseling Like the Good Shepherd: Leading Counselees to Rest in Jesus
John 10***

A few years ago I was running some errands one afternoon when I noticed that one car tire was almost completely flat. I slowly made my way to a tire store. There was a long line and wait. Finally, I spoke to an employee: “I see my car parked over there...has the tire been repaired?”

“Let me check...you’re good to go,” he said as he handed me the keys.

“I think we need to settle up, first. I haven’t paid yet.”

“It’s all taken care of...next time you need some tires, think about us.”

It was only about \$10, but I felt like I’d hit the lottery! I had a need (admittedly, a pretty small one), and it was just nice to have someone extend a little extra kindness.

When our counselees come to us, they also come because they have needs — often *large* needs. They may be processing their own illness, or the illness of someone especially beloved. Perhaps the harshness of death has invaded their lives, or sin (their own or someone else’s) has intruded and produced its deadly “fruit” in their lives. Perhaps they are struggling with a significant decision or event and the uncertainty of it has provoked great stress for them. Maybe there is no major issue, but the tyranny of multiple daily distresses has just *worn them out*. They are *weary*.

Counselees come to us with weaknesses and burdens. Scripture uses various images to denote their position; today we want to see what God says about His people being His “sheep.” We think of sheep as being cute and cuddly — your children may have sheep stuffed animals and they just look so adorable. The reality is different than the image; remember **why sheep need shepherds** —

- ✓ **Sheep are DEPENDENT** — they are susceptible to the attacks of wolves and other predators. They have few natural weapons to defend against attackers (they don’t have tusks like an elephant, speed like a gazelle, or even a shell like a turtle). And they have trouble finding what they need on their own, which is why God, as David’s shepherd (Ps. 23) leads him to new and green pastures for feeding and water sources for drinking. Sheep are not even naturally inclined to find food or water on their own.
- ✓ **Sheep are ODORIFEROUS** — they don’t smell good. Their wool picks up the scents of nature, blood, and waste. This image (and smell) fits the life of people (even God’s people) well — we are susceptible to sin, and our lives carry the stink of complications of sin and suffering.
- ✓ **Sheep are WANDERERS** — they are prone to getting lost and wandering into trouble. (And wandering back into trouble once they have been released.) Even more, they are prone to following false shepherds and experiencing the tragedies associated with false shepherds. Some of our counselees have been deluded by the Evil One, followed some of his false teachers or believed in his worldly philosophy.

All those realities suggest that the sheep aren't going to be restful, content, or at peace. They will have trouble. And our counselees are like those sheep; they are needy and restless. And they need kindness. And hope. And truth.

As good biblical counselors, you know that Jesus Christ is the answer to these dilemmas for our counselees (and us). *Just who is this Man, Jesus?* John's gospel pictures Christ as Healer, Teacher, the Water of life, the Bread of life, the True Vine, the Way, the Truth, the Resurrection and the Life. But another image dominates as well. In John 10 Jesus reveals Himself as *the Good Shepherd*. That title speaks of His character, His work, and His person. He is our counselee's Leader when they are lost. He is their Guide when they are weary. He is how they will find rest in their needs. He is their Savior who will care for them.

This afternoon we want to see three pictures of Christ as the Good Shepherd in John 10, how those pictures will lead our counselees to rest in Him, and *then some implications for our counseling ministries*.

How is Jesus the Shepherd of His sheep? John provides three attributes of Jesus as Shepherd.

1. Jesus is the **TRUE** Shepherd (vv. 1-6)
2. Jesus is the **PROTECTING** Shepherd (vv. 7-10)
3. Jesus is the **SACRIFICING** Shepherd (vv. 11-18)

1. Jesus is the TRUE Shepherd (vv. 1-6)

• The True Shepherd is not a FALSE shepherd.

- ✓ Jesus uses multiple terms to denote shepherds who are not true shepherds — their character is false and what they do is false:
 - There are **thieves and robbers** (vv. 1, 8, 10) — they come to take from and harm the sheep.
 - There are **strangers** (twice in v. 5). These are “those who belong to another,” they are “foreigners” who are outside the fold of God’s people. And what they teach and do is “foreign” to the work of God (things like ungodly teachers and their philosophies and ideologies).
 - There are **wolves** (twice in v. 12); unlike the “foreigners” these don’t pretend to be shepherds; they are adversarial and seek to take and destroy. They are bent on destroying God’s people.
- ✓ To understand this parable, remember the Biblical background of false shepherds (Ezk. 34:1-15).
 - They are uncaring of the flock given to them to care for as a stewardship (*my emphasis*) —

- **Jer. 10:21** For the shepherds have become stupid And have not sought the LORD; Therefore they have not prospered, And all *their flock is scattered*.
- **Jer. 23:1-2** “Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!” declares the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel concerning the shepherds who are tending My people: “You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and *have not attended to them*; behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds,” declares the LORD.
- **Zech. 10:2** For the teraphim speak iniquity, And the diviners see lying visions And tell false dreams; They comfort in vain. Therefore the people *wander like sheep, They are afflicted*, because there *is no shepherd*.

- They are greedy and self-absorbed — they care for themselves to the detriment of others —

- **Is. 56:11** ...they are shepherds who have no understanding; They have all turned to their own way, Each one *to his unjust gain*, to the last one.
- **Ezk. 34:2, 8** “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, “Thus says the Lord GOD, “Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been *feeding themselves!* Should not the shepherds feed the flock? ...As I live,” declares the Lord GOD, “surely because My flock has *become a prey*, My flock has even *become food* for all the beasts of the field for lack of a shepherd, and My shepherds did not search for My flock, but rather the shepherds *fed themselves and did not feed My flock...*”

- They lead the flock astray — to places that aren’t safe pastures —

- **Jer. 50:6** “My people have *become lost sheep*; Their shepherds have *led them astray*. They have made them turn aside on the mountains; They have gone along from mountain to hill And have *forgotten their resting place.*”
- **Ezek. 34:5** “They *were scattered* for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field and *were scattered.*” [Cf. also Zech. 11:5.]

✓ They are foolish and ungodly —

○ **Jer. 10:21** *For the shepherds have become stupid* And have not sought the LORD; Therefore they have not prospered, And all their flock is scattered.

✓ They are under the curse and condemnation of God; He is opposed to them in the strongest way —

○ Jer. 23:1; 25:34 *“Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!”* declares the LORD...*“Wail, you shepherds, and cry; And wallow in ashes, you masters of the flock; For the days of your slaughter and your dispersions have come, And you will fall like a choice vessel.”*

○ Ezek. 34:2 *“Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock?’”* [Cf. also Jer. 49:19; 50:44; Ezek. 34:10; Zech. 10:3; 11:16-17.]

✓ The OT seems to speak more about (and against) false shepherds than about godly shepherds because Israel has a history of false shepherds who perpetually led astray and destroyed the sheep.

✓ *Jesus’ teaching in Jn. 10 is told against that background* — the Pharisees are blind guides (9:39-41).

✓ *But* Jesus provides the contrast for these false shepherds —

- **Verse 1** — He comes into the sheepfold (walled enclosure or cave for night protection) by the **door** (entrance), not over the wall to steal and do violence (as **thieves and robbers**). While Jesus doesn’t quote the OT about false prophets, all the warnings and judgments we have just read are behind this image; the Pharisees would have understood Jesus was condemning them.
- Also, the **doorkeeper** (v. 3) opened the door for Him (authenticating His validity as shepherd). The doorkeeper is *not* the shepherd; he is a hired “porter” who has overnight care of the sheep.
- But because Jesus is the true Shepherd, He is allowed into the sheep pen to do His true work:
 - ... He protects the sheep inside the pen (so enemies cannot get in and destroy).
 - ... He leads the sheep outside the pen to places where they will be safe.

• In vv. 1-6 Jesus notes two primary qualities of the true **shepherd** —

• **The True Shepherd KNOWS His sheep (v. 3)**

✓ He **calls His sheep by name**. He knows their identity (unlike thieves) — He knows them (*personally and individually*). He does not have “sheep” (as a group); he has individual sheep.

✓ He knows who they are *and they belong* to Him, they **are His**. Notice this emphasis in the passage:

➤ **His own sheep** (vv. 3, 4) — the emphasis is on possession and ownership, which affirms His devotion to the sheep; he cares for them in a way the hireling does not (anticipating v. 12).

➤ **My sheep** (vv. 26-27) — the true sheep know the true Shepherd and are protected eternally.

➤ In summary, because the sheep are His means He is possessive of them; He wants and desires them and desires relationship with them, which is what He prayed to the Father (17:24-26).

- They not only belong to Him, but they are a gift to Him — **My Father has given them to Me** (v. 29).
- How does the Good Shepherd know His sheep?
 - ... He knows the sheep as their Creator and Sustainer. He knows their personal identity. He knows their needs, burdens, failures, weaknesses, and sins (2:25; Mt. 6:8, 32).
 - ... Christ knows them as His sheep in all their attributes and weaknesses as sheep. He knows their sin. All their sins. And He seeks them, pursues them and embraces them as beloved children (because they *are* children).
 - ... This is a comfort to the counselee in the same way God's omnipresence is a comfort. Because He is ever-present, they not only are never alone, but they are with the transcendent God.
 - ... Christ the Great Shepherd is *with* His sheep; so your counselee is not alone. Beyond you as the counselor, a care group, and the extensive church body, she has the ever-present Shepherd to guide and direct her.
- Beyond this, Jesus is the Messianic Shepherd (Ezk. 34:11-16)... He is *the King* who shepherds. As the King, He knows His citizens and has all authority in Heaven and on earth to comfort and care for those citizens (your counselees).

- Is. 40:11 *Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, In His arm He will gather the lambs And carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.*
- Mic. 5:4 *And He will arise and shepherd His flock In the strength of the LORD, In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God. And they will remain, Because at that time He will be great To the ends of the earth.*
- Mic. 7:14 *Shepherd Your people with Your scepter, The flock of Your possession Which dwells by itself in the woodland, In the midst of a fruitful field. Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead As in the days of old.*

- **The True Shepherd LEADS His sheep**

- ✓ In v. 4 the shepherd puts out the sheep — every day the shepherd led the sheep to pasture. There were dangers in the fold at night; there were new dangers ahead of them in the day pasture. So...
- ✓ He **goes ahead of them** — scouting and showing them *the* pathway (the only one) to follow. He is providing visible, directive leadership. "This is the way to God. This is the way to safety" (Ps. 23:2).
 - The shepherd needed to lead the sheep because they didn't know where to go and they had no ability to protect themselves on their travels from pasture to pasture.
 - The word **lead** means to escort with care — commonly used of God (Ex. 15:13; Is. 40:11; 49:10).
 - And He leads **to quiet waters**; that doesn't mean that Israel's shepherds led to turbulent, rushing water; shepherds often watered their sheep at wells which are quiet and peaceful.
 - This emphasizes that they are taken to a place where they can drink at peace — without being rushed and without being worried. The **water** is still and refreshing; God's pools are **restful**.
- ✓ The **sheep follow Him** — and they follow by obeying Him.

- While the sheep follow the Shepherd, there are others who are enticing them away from the Shepherd — they want the sheep or what the sheep possess for themselves. The foolish sheep are the ones who listen to false shepherds. (Let us not miss Jesus' point that there will be attempts to lead the sheep away; there will be competing messages and influences.)
- But the sheep follow **Him** (and no one else) because they have trained themselves to **know His voice**. They know His truth and what He says. But they also love and embrace that truth — knowledge becomes action and obedience.
 - ... Unlike Demas, who listened to the Thessalonian message and learned to love this present world (2 Tim. 4:10), they listened to the message of Christ and learned to love Him.
 - ... Unlike unnamed members of the Ephesian church, they do not leave Christ and the fellowship and protection of the church, because they *really are* of Christ (1 Jn. 2:19).
- ✓ The sheep *love* to follow Him (and absolutely no one else [**strangers**]; cf. double negative **not** in v. 5). That means that they love to *obey* Him — He leads by telling them where to go and what to do and they willingly embrace Him and follow Him (Jn. 14:15, 21, 24).
- There are shepherds in Israel who were there for selfish purposes (v. 1). They were not shepherds.
- There is a Shepherd, a true Shepherd who does not steal from, abuse, or mislead the sheep: Jesus Christ. He was trustworthy for the blind man (9:1ff); He is trustworthy for all men (unlike Pharisees).
- Which of your counselees needs leadership and direction?
 - ✓ The anorexic teenaged boy?
 - ✓ The pornography pursuing housewife?
 - ✓ The adulterating husband?
 - ✓ The video-game playing teenager? Or the perpetually drunk father? Or the lazy college-aged son who won't get a job? Or...?
 - ✓ Jesus is the Shepherd who will lead them to the truth and Jesus is One to whom they will be led who is always faithful and will always satisfy.
 - ✓ G. K. Chesterton said that the man who knocks on the door of the brothel knocks for God. That man has a hunger in his soul that can only be satisfied by God and he is being deluded by and seeking false substitutes who will only lead him to false places. But John points us to Jesus, who is the true Shepherd — the Shepherd who speaks, hears, and knows all things and thus is trustworthy.
 - ✓ Use the troubles and discomforts of your counselees to demonstrate the Christ-sized hole in their hearts and then teach them of His singular comfort and care.

2. Jesus is the **PROTECTING** Shepherd (vv. 7-10)

- Here Jesus changes the imagery slightly — instead of being the shepherd, He is **the door** to the fold —
 - ✓ This anticipates another truth from Jesus that there are not multiple pathways into the fold of God — only one (cf. 14:6).

- ✓ There are others who are attempting to steal the sheep (v. 8), but notice the complete resistance of the sheep to following false shepherds/teachers.
 - They have heard the good message of Christ and nothing else is enticing.
 - When we got married, I was a Miracle Whip person. But pretty much any sandwich spread would do. Any off brand, generic, white spread on my sandwich was fine. Then I got married and my wife enlightened me to the superiority of mayonnaise. And not just any mayo — Hellman’s (no, not Duke’s either). I could buy something else, but it would just mean that I’d need another trip to the store to purchase Hellman’s. Once you taste the best, nothing else will do.
 - That’s the sheep and their Shepherd — they hear the alluring call of false shepherds, but they have fed their souls on the true Shepherd and they won’t listen to anyone else.
- ✓ As the door, Jesus adds, **if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved** (v. 9). They might come through Him, they might not. But *only* those who come through Him have salvation. Jesus is particularly emphasizing the certainty of salvation for those who come to Him. None who come and none who ask and none who follow will be excluded. He will save anyone who comes to Him.
- ✓ He is also emphasizing His exclusivity; if you want what only Christ can give (forgiveness and redemption) you must go to Him — and only Him. Christ says, “you must **enter through Me...**”
- ✓ If I say to you, “Come to my home tomorrow and I will smoke meat for you,” you will ask, “where do you live?” I might say, “Oh anywhere...just come to any house and I will smoke meat for you...” That won’t work; if you want my smoked meat, then you need to come to my house, *exclusively*.
- ✓ Jesus is reiterating the OT message of a singular means of salvation and hope:

- Deut. 4:39 “Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the LORD, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other.”
- Is. 45:5-6 “I am the LORD, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me; That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun That there is no one besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other...” [also 45:21-22; 46:9; Acts 4:12]

- Christ is the only way, though there are pretenders (and always have been, e.g., v. 8).
 - ✓ But notice what all pretenders produce — progressive destruction: **steal, kill, destroy** (v. 10).
 - ✓ The other shepherds, instead of offering life, take life (**steal, kill, destroy**, v. 10) — legalism kills; self-righteousness kills; pride kills; unacknowledged and unconfessed sin kills. Every way to “life” apart from Christ kills. Everything without Christ kills. *Only Christ protects and only Christ is restful.*
 - ✓ Remind your counselee: Yes, following Christ is *costly*. But not following Christ is *deadly*. Not following Christ means He just might turn you over to your desires (Rom. 1).
- To say that Jesus is the only door is not only to say that He is the only way, but that as the door, He provides safety and security for the sheep.

OT scholar Sir George Adam Smith was traveling a century ago in the Middle East and fell into a conversation with a shepherd. The man showed him the fold into which the sheep were led at night. It consisted of four walls, with a way in. Sir George said to him, "That is where they go at night?" "Yes," said the shepherd, "and when they are in there, they are perfectly safe." "But there is no door," said Sir George. "I am the door," said the shepherd. He was not a Christian man; he was not speaking in the language of the New Testament. He was speaking from the Arab shepherd's standpoint. Sir George looked at him and said, "What do you mean by the door?" Said the shepherd, "When the light has gone, and all the sheep are inside, I lie in the open space, and no sheep ever goes out but across my body, and no wolf comes in unless he crosses my body; I am the door."

- The *Good Shepherd* is both morally upright and pleasurable. And from His goodness He provides: **salvation, pasture** (v. 9), **abundant life** ("over the top, more than necessary, full life," v. 10; cf. 1:16).
 - ✓ He does not promise an absence of hardship; life on this planet will always be hard.
 - ✓ But He does offer a new ability to stand in and endure the hardship — it is by clinging to the Savior — cf. Ps. 23:4. And when you and I and our counselees lean on Him, we will only find goodness.
- If you and I and our counselees want rest, we will need to go to Christ: "You have formed us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in You." [Augustine]
- Yes, He is exclusive; yes, to follow Him is restrictive. Every dead and deadly way is excluded. Jesus is the only way to life. He is the protection and safety for our struggling counselees (and ourselves when we struggle). He understands (knows) and He cares. And He can do (and has done) something about it:

3. Jesus is the **SACRIFICING Shepherd** (vv. 11-18)

- In case they missed it, in v. 11 Jesus states overtly that He (alone) is the **good Shepherd**.
 - ✓ "I am the good Shepherd" is one of Jesus' great self-revelations of His nature. He makes seven such statements in John (Bread of life, Light of the world, Door of the sheep, resurrection and life, the way, the truth, and the life, and the true Vine). Good Shepherd is one of those revelations (cf. 1 Pt. 2:25).
 - ✓ That He chooses shepherd imagery is contrary to what is commonly taught about shepherds in that day. Often it is said that they were despised, mocked, and not trusted.
 - ✓ Yet Scripture has a different (positive) perspective on the nature of shepherds.
 - Shepherd imagery was used of kings and their responsibility to care (2 Sam. 5:2; Ps. 78:70ff; Ezk. 37:24).
 - The Shepherd image is also used of YHWH (Ps. 23:1-4; 28:9; 80:1; 95:7).
 - Shepherd even became a title for elders in the church (1 Pt. 3:1ff).
 - The OT prophecies a Messiah who will shepherd (Is. 40:11), which is just what Jesus did (Mt. 9:36; 15:24; 18:12-13).

- **Is. 40:11** Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, In His arm He will gather the lambs And carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.

- **Matt. 9:36** Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd.
- **Matt. 18:12-13** “What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying? If it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray.”

- As the **good shepherd**, Christ voluntarily gave up His life for His sheep (cf. **19:30**).
 - ✓ Note that He dies **for** His sheep — i.e., in place of, as a substitute.
 - ✓ No earthly shepherd ever voluntarily gave up his life to save the life of his sheep (if he died, so did the sheep; nor did he plan at the beginning of the night — “I will die tonight...”). Jesus tells us in **verse 12** that no hired hand ever would do that; he’d **see** (theorize), **leave**, and RUN from the wolf.
 - ✓ But the Good Shepherd **dies** for His sheep. But it’s a different kind of death, isn’t it? When the Good Shepherd dies, He also lives — and so do all who believe in and follow Him. There is life in His death.
 - ✓ Don’t ever get over the fact that you deserved to die, but Christ died in your stead (Rom. 5:8, 10; 2 Cor. 5:21; **1 Pt. 2:24; 3:18**). And don’t let your counselee ever forget this great truth, either.
 - ✓ I would be remiss to think that everyone at this conference at this conference is a true follower of this Good Shepherd. It may be that you are here with a friend to learn more about the church, caring for people, and the Bible, but like a wayward sheep, you have not listened to the voice of Christ and obeyed Him. You don’t belong to Him; you are not His. (You aren’t a Christian – little Christ.)
 - The message of the gospel is that our sin leaves us condemned and powerless — God will judge our sin because He is holy and must punish sin, and we are powerless to pay for the penalty of our sin and we are powerless to change ourselves or be pleasing to God.
 - But Christ died on the cross to pay our sin debt and to liberate us from the bondage of sin.
 - That’s what Jesus meant when He said right before He died, “It is finished” (19:30). The work to satisfy God for our sin was finished; and the work to liberate us from sin’s power was finished.
 - If you have not yet believed in Christ (or if you are pretending to believe when you don’t), I urge you to begin trusting in Him today. If you’d like to know more, talk to the person who brought you...
 - ✓ And not only does Christ **die** for you (v. 11), but you get all the blessings of His position:

He wore my crown, the crown of thorns; I wear his crown, the crown of glory. He wore my dress, nay, rather, he wore my nakedness when he died upon the cross; I wear his robes, the royal robes of the King of kings. He bore my shame; I bear his honour. He endured my sufferings to this end that my joy may be full, and that his joy may be fulfilled in me. He laid in the grave that I might rise from the dead and that I may dwell in him. [Spurgeon on the Christian Life, 120.]

- In contrast to the hirelings, as the **good Shepherd** (v. 14), Jesus **knows** His sheep, and **lays down His life** (v. 15) — so that they know Him in the **same way** as the **Father** and He know each other (v. 15).

- ✓ As an overflow of His love for the Father, Christ graciously brought His sheep into that loving relationship — so His followers enjoy the love of the Father too!
- ✓ N.B. — Out of the Triune relationship the Father is pleased with us because of Christ (Mt. 3:17).
- ✓ And then He necessarily (*must*) brings others into that same fellowship (v. 16). And we Gentiles are the *other sheep* (17:20-24). He dies for those who do not know Him, who are outside Him, to whom He has no obligation (cf. Eph. 2:12-13) — which demonstrates His great love and glory.
- The *reason* Christ took on manhood and sacrificed His life for His sheep is because He loved (v. 17). The Father loved Him and He loved the Father (vv. 17-18). So He joyfully & voluntarily gave (v. 18).
- Our counselees will be tempted to focus on the difficulties of their lives and the losses they have suffered and the sacrifices they have had to make; keep their eyes focused on the One great Shepherd who has made sacrifices for them in His condescension to manhood, His unjust trial, His murder, and His bearing the weight of the wrath of His Father against all the sin of all those who would believe in Him. Jesus has sacrificed infinitely more for us so we might be His sheep. Let us go to Him in adoration.

Implications for biblical counselors —

- All the occurrences of “shepherd” words in John appear in this chapter (6x — vv. 2, 11, 12, 14, 16), with one exception — Christ’s exhortation to Peter to tend Christ’s sheep (Jn. 21:15-17).
- And that imagery persists in our understanding of the church — to be an elder is to shepherd/pastor God’s sheep. And pastors and elders train others with the church body to carry out that ministry work.
- What does shepherding look like for us as counselors?

1. Be a biblical counselor who KNOWS the Good Shepherd

- ✓ Have gospel faith (believe the gospel)
 - Know the gospel and be able to explain it clearly and easily (e.g., grace, man, God, Christ, faith, hope). Know key texts, what they mean, and how to explain them.
 - Preach the gospel to yourself regularly.
 - ... Wash yourself with the gospel of forgiveness regularly — daily. When your counseling exposes your own sin or sinful heart desires, be quick to repent and be transformed.
 - ... Let the gospel of Christ comfort your own heart of your forgiveness. Know the freedom that comes from genuine repentance (8:32, 34-36).
 - Preach the gospel to your counselees so that they come to be known by Christ.
- ✓ Have obedient faith (live the gospel) that really knows (and is in fellowship with) Christ. We want to know the Scriptures, but we want to know the Scriptures so that we will know *Him* (Phil. 3:10 — “that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead”).

- ✓ Your counselees will be like you; just like children emulate parents, citizens follow leaders, counselees follow counselors. Does your life lead to Christ and is it worth imitating (1 Cor. 11:1)?

2. Be a biblical counselor who LOVES the Good Shepherd

- ✓ Delight in Christ yourself. Treasure Christ. The questions Jesus asks Peter at the end of this book are appropriate for us as well — like Peter, we have also sinned and failed Christ. And we can be restored to fellowship and intimacy with Him —
 - “Do you love Me?” — “Do you love Me?” — “Do you love Me?”
 - Just working for Him doesn’t honor Him. *Don’t work for Him without loving Him* (see Jesus’ warning in Rev. 2:4). He wants our service — but only as it flows out of our love for Him.
 - On our anniversary I might get flowers for my wife; she might ask, “Why did you?” “I have to.” Is that true? Yes — I need to demonstrate my love. Does it honor her? No. In a similar way, work for Christ without love for Christ dishonors Him (and makes the work about us).
 - Our effectiveness in counseling is based on our love for Christ; if we want people to love Christ then we must also love and follow Him. Do you love Him?
- ✓ Have a contagious affection for Christ and remind your counselees that they have nothing without Him. One counselee at the end of our counseling told me, “You might be interested in the best thing you did to help me — you had me read and memorize in the Psalms and you reminded me that it didn’t matter what happened at work or what my wife or my kids did, but that the Lord and Christ was my satisfaction and I needed to stop trying to find my satisfaction elsewhere.” He re-learned to love the Lord....

3. Be a biblical counselor who is COMPASSIONATE like the Good Shepherd

- ✓ Jesus says He is the Good Shepherd — did John portray Him as a Good Shepherd in this book?
 - He invited Andrew and Peter and Philip (and others) to follow Him (1:43).
 - He compassionately cared for wedding guests when they ran out of wine (and honored His mother at the same time, 2:1-11).
 - He gently corrected Nicodemus and told him how to be born again (regenerated, 3:1ff).
 - He intentionally went through Samaria to meet with an adulterous woman there and give her and her village the gospel (4:4ff).
 - He was compassionate towards a hungry crowd of 5000 men and fed them all from five loaves and two fish (6:1ff)
 - He told His disciples not to fear when He walked on the water and they were afraid (6:16ff)
 - He forgave the woman who was caught in adultery (8:1ff)
 - He healed and then forgave the man born blind (9:1ff, 35ff).
 - He let Lazarus die *so that* He could resurrect Him and demonstrate His life-giving power (11:6, 15, 40ff).

- Even while He knew His intention and ability to resurrect Lazarus, Jesus wept over Lazarus' death and the effect of sin (11;33-35).
- And on it goes — He is compassionate towards the suffering, the sinning, the broken, the grieving. (You might read this gospel and note all the different ways He is compassionate).
- And He leads all those same people with remarkable (infinite) grace and gentleness.
- Christ saw then (and sees now) all the temptations, all the sin, all the injustice, all the suffering in the world. And He never despaired. He always knew what to do and He always did what was wise. He will always lead every counselee (and counselor) to safe places when they are treated unjustly, tempted, sinning, or suffering.
- Supremely, He will lead to Himself. Look to Him for peace, direction, and sustenance.
- ✓ We serve as shepherds under the Great Shepherd. We care for His sheep. And sheep get lost. And sheep run away. And when we lead them home they get lost and run away again. Sheep need help. Repeatedly. And (how can I say this delicately?) sheep stink. When sheep do what sheep do, we should not be angry, discouraged, and surprised. They are doing what they do. And we are called by God to do what we are to do in that moment — be a compassionate shepherd who knows the sheep and the nature of those sheep and seek them and guide them to the Great Shepherd who will provide the nourishment they need.
- We are compassionate with the sheep because Christ has called us to do that (Jn. 21:15-17).
- We are compassionate with the sheep because we are also sheep and we also “stink” and need the same kind of help from others.

4. Be a biblical counselor who AVOIDS the UNGODLY shepherds

- ✓ Be discerning with biblical texts (know what God means in His revelation)
- ✓ Be discerning with counseling practices (use God's means to care for God's people)
- ✓ Be discerning about worldly lies and help your counselees identify them — Satan's delusions are so enticing and persuasive in the moment of temptation; they look so delectable. And they moment they are indulged those same temptations are so tragically destructive.
- Everyone is listening to someone and heeding some message. Beware of feeding yourself (or your counselee) on false teaching that will entice you or them to forget the voice of the Good Shepherd. It is subtle and can happen quickly.
- A Puritan said the waters of temptation look ankle deep and calm before we step into the water; after walking into sin, though, the current rages and we are in waters well over our heads. Help your counselee see the reality of sin and the hopefulness of Christ to keep them out of that sin.
- One of my dearest friends in seminary, after 20 years of pastoral ministry, engaged in sexual sin; when he wrote me about it he said, “[my wife] and I recently separated. I left [the church] in January...I wish I could say it looked hopeful but I gave up and fell and that's hard to recover from.”

- In his temptations, he listened to the siren call of the world and stopped listening to Christ. And he lost his marriage, his family, his friends, and his ministry.
 - Conversely, many years ago a friend was struggling with pornography. And I knew he had experienced one night of adultery years prior to that, so I hesitantly asked the obvious question, “I hate to ask this, but have you gone back to a physical relationship with another woman?”
 - And he wisely and humbly said to me, “Don’t you ever apologize for asking me that question; that night was the darkest night of my soul and I never want to return to it so don’t you ever hesitate to ask.” He was right — before the sin, the temptation looked bright and hopeful; after the sin, the temptation and the act were dark and despairing.
- ✓ Be a counselor who identifies and leads Christ’s sheep away from false shepherds and wolves. One of our responsibilities, like Christ, is to comfort our counselees by protecting them.

CONCLUSION: Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd; when counselees follow Him, they will find rest, peace, comfort, direction, wisdom, hope — they will find all they need for all their needs.

Listen to what Charles Spurgeon says about our Shepherd:

There is more in Jesus, the good Shepherd, than you can pack away in a shepherd. He is the good, the great, the chief Shepherd; but he is much more. Emblems to set him forth may be multiplied as the drops of the morning, but the whole multitude will fail to reflect all his brightness. Creation is too small a frame in which to hang his likeness. Human thought is too contracted, human speech too feeble, to set him forth to the full....He is inconceivably above our conceptions, unutterably above our utterances. [Quoted in Hughes, 269.]

I don’t know *why* you and your counselees need this Shepherd today. But I know you need Him. And He is ever-present for you and He is infinitely powerful for you in your exact circumstance. Go to Him for your comfort, your protection, and your peace.