

Listening to the Shepherd

John 10: 22-30

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How well do people listen? I recall when Jackie and I and the family lived in Malawi. We drove a Toyota Land Cruiser and needed service to the vehicle from time to time. Our mechanic came to our house with his 'black bag' of tools. As he was getting ready to work, I mentioned to him what I thought he needed to check. When I mentioned something, his reply was often in a low voice: - "Yah, Yah, Yah." It did not appear that he was listening very closely to what I was saying. The question I have for you today: Are you listening? Are you listening to the Shepherd?

People listen to what they love. Two people were walking on a crowded city street during the noon hour. One of them said, "Watch as I throw these 5 coins in the air. I predict that when they hit the sidewalk, many people will hear and start looking on the ground." The other person said, "No, it is far too busy and noisy, and besides, many people are plugged into their earphones – few will take notice." "Want to make a bet?" said the other. The man threw the coins in the air and just as he predicted, several people stopped and looked intently on the ground to see where the coins have gone off to. People listen to what they love.

Jesus, the ideal shepherd: Jesus describes himself as the Good Shepherd. He does know his sheep and his sheep know him. Why do the sheep follow him? They follow because they know his voice. Over time the sheep will recognize that certain benefits are associated with the Shepherd's voice.

Sheep are not dumb. The sheep know that their shepherd feeds them, protects them and cares for their needs. The sheep can distinguish the voice of their shepherd from others. Sheep are often not seen as smart because they have the 'flock' mentality, but God created them in such a way that they stick together as a means of survival. The new lambs and older ones which have been added to the flock later are conditioned to follow the other sheep until they also recognize the voice of the shepherd.

A great picture of discipleship. One can say the body of Christ (the congregation) is like a flock. Children and others come in and walk beside the other believers who continually point them to Jesus.

"My sheep hear my voice. I know them and they follow me." (John 10: 27). As followers of Christ we are to listen to Christ's voice in our 'flock' and in our lives and encourage others to open their ears and follow the Shepherd.

Listening to the shepherd's voice -learn to love him. We need others to help us mature as disciples. Even while we may already hear the voice of Jesus the Shepherd, we need the flock to continually encourage us to pray and listen to the Shepherd who loves you. Are you listening to other voices or to the voice the Shepherd? Choose the voice of the Good Shepherd. Amen.