

[Salvatore Mannino](#) is either an idiot or an evil genius. Mr. Mannino, age 52, was found in a confused state, wandering the grounds of a cathedral while on vacation in Scotland. He told police he didn't know who he was. After days of investigating, Mannino finally confessed: He had faked amnesia to get away from his nagging mother-in-law. Poor guy just wanted a few days of peace-and-quiet.

Clearly some people will do just about anything to get to what they think are greener pastures. But as we saw last week, the grass isn't always greener on the other side of the fence. If we want to graze in greener pastures, then we have to follow our Good Shepherd. Jesus will lead us. But we have to follow him.

In order to understand what it means to follow the Good Shepherd, we looked at characteristics of sheep. That's who the Bible says we are. We are sheep. And

sheep need a flock. Sheep need a fold...that's a place of security.

The third thing we need to understand about sheep, in order to understand ourselves, is that sheep are easily influenced.

We are easily influenced. Maybe not all the time. We tend to think we make our way, we make our own decisions, no one could unduly influence us. But the Bible says we are like sheep. We are easily influenced. In a flock, when a few sheep head off in the wrong direction, what happens? The other sheep look over and think, *hey, they're on to something. I need to go check it out.* We do the same thing. If you don't believe me, look at marketing and advertising. Look at the crowd mentality. Look at something as basic as fashion...the clothes we buy. People started wearing jeans with holes in them, and soon you're paying \$100 for denims that are intentionally ripped and/or torn. There's nothing practical or comfortable

about it. As more and more people are wearing them, I want in, too. God knows us. We are like sheep. We are easily influenced. We go along with the crowd.

That's why we need a shepherd. We're sheep. We're vulnerable. We're easily influenced. That's why John 10 talks about how Jesus can meet the needs in our lives. How does the Good Shepherd do that? John 10:2-3 says:

But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

What does the shepherd do?

First, he calls us.

The shepherd calls his own sheep by name. Often, at night, several different flocks were combined in one big sheepfold. Even when grazing, flocks would mix. It happened. But there was no problem come morning when the flocks had to be separated out. Each shepherd had a call that was unique to his flock. He would make the sound, and they would recognize it and follow him. The sheep know the shepherd's voice.

That's the way it is for you and me. There are a lot of voices in the world. But the voice of Jesus Christ is clear. It's distinct from any other voice. If we want greener pastures, then we have to listen to his voice.

Think about all the places in the Bible where Jesus calls people by name. When Mary goes to the tomb after Jesus is crucified, she thinks she's talking to a gardener. When Jesus says her name, she knows it's him.

Jesus not only recruited his disciples by calling them by name, he also helped one disciple, Simon, see his new role by changing his name to Peter, "The Rock."

Sometimes when Jesus calls my name it's not at the most pleasant time. When my mom would call for me with "Richard Lee Mortimer," I knew it wasn't for hugs and cookies. Sometimes Jesus calls my name with a gentle correction. Or a reorientation of my attitude. Or to keep me from hardening my heart. That's what Jesus does.

So listen for Jesus' voice. You hear him in Scripture. You hear him through other believers. You hear him in your prayer time. Listen for the voice of Jesus. You will see how he's leading you. You will understand how he knows you. He knows you personally. He knows your struggles. He knows your problems. He knows your depression. Jesus knows everything about you. For me, that's a reassuringly scary thought. He knows everything about me. And he still calls me by name. Jesus died on the cross knowing everything about me. And still he chose to bear my sin unto death.

Jesus calls us. His voice is clear.

The second thing Jesus does is he leads us.

Jesus leads us. His voice is clear and his direction is clear. Jesus gives clear direction for our lives. Have you noticed how tiring it is when you don't know where you're going next? Confusion is exhausting. That's why playing defense in football is so tiring. They don't know where the offense is going, so they have to work harder. Not knowing where you're going is wearying. But Jesus clears up the confusion with his direction. He says, "I lead my sheep." As verse 4 says,

"When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice."

How do you notice Jesus leads his sheep? He doesn't drive them. He doesn't walk beside them. Jesus leads out ahead of us. To lead the sheep, the shepherd has to go first. That's a good deal for the sheep. If there's danger out ahead of them, the shepherd will deal with it first.

As you think about the upcoming week, you've got things happening you know about. You've got things you think you know about but you don't know. You've got things you don't know and you know you don't know. And you've got things you wish you know more about but you don't. Your week will be a mixed bag of knowns and unknowns. Whatever situations you face in the coming week, Jesus has already been there. He's already faced them. Jesus has already prepared the way for you. The shepherd has gone ahead of you. And when you know that, you can face anything with love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. That is always a good thing. A good thing from the Good Shepherd.

Here's how Jesus puts it in verse 5:

A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.

The sheep don't look and see a wolf in sheep's clothing and say, "You know, he went to all the trouble of dressing up in sheep's clothing, I think I'll listen to what he has to say." Sheep don't do that. If another comes in and tries to lead them astray, they run. That's a great lesson for us.

There are false teachers who say real interesting things. It can be someone at work who has some really misguided things to say about marriage. It can be someone who's passing on the latest trend in parenting. False teaching is everywhere.

Know your Savior and your Bible well enough to recognize false teaching.

Sheep are smart enough to run away from false teachers. Even if it sounds interesting. Don't misunderstand. It's a good thing to expose myself to different ideas. It helps reinforce Biblical truth to hear different points of view. As long as I am keeping my eyes on the right shepherd. Knowing what the opposition is saying is different from believing what they're saying. I just need to make sure I'm following the Good Shepherd.

To understand how a shepherd leads, all we have to do is look at a couple of his important tools.

The first is a sling. A sling would be used to defend the sheep against a predator. But it would also be used to lob a stone out ahead of a wandering sheep. The rock would thud a warning. There's danger here. Has God ever done that for you? Some person would come into your life, some verse would come to mind, or I would say the wrong thing at the right time, or the right thing at the wrong time, either way, these are all rocks landing just out ahead of you. *Be careful. Wake up. Look out. Don't go there.* That's the way the Good Shepherd leads his flock.

A shepherd would also use a staff. Think of it as a shepherd's crook. It was used to prod and nudge the sheep this way or that. Never to hurt them or punish them. Sometimes, as the sheep came in through the doorway, the shepherd would use the staff like a bar, to slow the sheep down as they passed under it, in order to inspect them for any wounds or injuries.

When you look at Jesus' analogy, it makes sense. It's so simple. There are shepherds and there are sheep. But as verse 6 reports,

"This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them."

It's simple to understand but they didn't. So Jesus tried a different approach:

So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came 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. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. - John 10:7-10

What is Jesus saying? Who is he? He is the door. What does a door do? See how simply put this is? Jesus saves. Jesus saves us from our sins. He saves us from our hurts. Jesus leads us to greener pastures in life. It's such an incredibly simple offer and yet people miss it. Jesus is the way to salvation. Wherever you are... whatever is happening in your life, when you are in Christ, that is going to be your greenest grass. In Christ, you are already there. To put it another way, the grass is always greenest where Jesus is. It doesn't matter where you are physically, when you are in Christ, Jesus is with you, and by that simple truth, the grass is greener.

Look at the picture Jesus paints. You come in and you go out. That is a picture of security. When the sheep have a place where they can come in and go out, that's security. When you can come in and go out freely, free from enemies, that is security.

God wants us to have that security in our lives. That's what happens when we enter the gate. No worries about enemies, no worries about guilt, no worries about fear. Why? Because Jesus Christ allows us to come in and go out. We find our security in Christ and Christ alone.

As I am fond of saying,

no matter what you experience or go through in life,
because Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd, you are
always going to be okay.

That doesn't mean there won't be trials or difficulties or pain or loss. That's life. But all will be well with your spirit...all will be well with your soul...because Jesus is the door of the sheep. No matter what you experience or go through in life, because Jesus is the Good Shepherd, you will be spiritually, emotionally, and eternally in green pastures.

We're going to stop and graze for a bit in the green pastures. Next week, we'll look at what it means to have the abundant life Jesus promises in verse 10. Here's what I want you to do. A little homework. In preparation for next week, do a little independent exploration of the prosperity gospel. Remember, just a few minutes ago, we talked about false teachings and false teachers. The prosperity gospel is a false gospel. It misappropriates John 10:10. Next week we'll look at what Jesus means by *the abundant life*.