**John 10:22-30 22Then the Festival of Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, 23and Jesus was walking in the temple area in Solomon’s Colonnade. 24So the Jews gathered around Jesus, asking, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” 25Jesus answered them, “I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I am doing in my Father’s name testify about me. 26But you do not believe, because you are not my sheep, as I said to you. 27My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. 28I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. 29My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. No one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. 30I and the Father are one.”**

Fulfilled Works March Victorious Over Empty Words

Of all the people in the world, who knows you the best? We each likely have someone that just gets us. Who is it, that often knows what you are thinking, even before you say something? They can just glance at you and know what’s going on with you. Who is it that can predict the things that you do or say? Who knows you better than anyone else?

It’s possible that you thought of yourself because if you are talking it’s likely you are going to be the best person to finish your own sentence. Even the people that are closest to you, really don’t know you the way you know yourself. There are certain things you keep to yourself, certain things you don’t want to share or even know how to share. Certain insecurities and fears. No one know about those except you. of all the people in the world, the person who knows you the best is you.

Don’t forget about how well Jesus knows you. Jesus knows you. Jesus says that he knows you like a shepherd knows his sheep. He not only talks about it but also serves as the shepherd. He victoriously lives more than empty words.

How well does he know you? It’s interesting how a shepherd can actually tell the difference between sheep. If we looked at sheep, all we would likely see are off white fluffy animals walking around. All sheep look the same. There might be differences in shape and size but for the most part the look the same. If you’ve seen one sheep, you’ve seen them all. Right?

Not true. A shepherd spends a lot of time with his sheep and as he does, he gets to know the different temperaments and quirks of each one of his sheep. That one over there, he might say, likes to stray away. That one likes to really chew things well. This one over here is sleepy all the time. This one, well this one is special in that he is very bad at finding his way. You got to watch out for this one, he’s mean. That one over there is always getting ahead of the others. Each sheep has its’ own temperament, different strengths and weaknesses. A good shepherd will know what those different things are about his sheep. He knows them.

Jesus knows you. When Jesus says he knows you, it more than that he knows what you look like, where your live, what you do, etc. It’s more than you and I can really comprehend. The Bible says Jesus knew each one of you even before the creation of the world. Even before the mountains were made and the rivers and oceans were formed, Jesus knew you completely. Your name. Your personality. Your fears. Your strengths. Before you were born, he knew who your parents would be. He knew what your DNA would be. He knew all your family and what that family would be like. Before you were alive, Jesus knew all these things about you. He knows things about you that you don’t even know or consider. He knows how your brain works. He knows how different things will affect you both good and bad. Sometimes you hear people say, “I was this many days old, when I found out that I…” Jesus would say, “I already knew.” He knows you much better than you will ever know yourself.

Such an intimate knowledge of you creates a unique connection between Jesus the shepherd and you a sheep. Possibly best described with a sound. (Make a pretend sheep calling sound). That’s a sound that goes with a story. (sound repeated) A man was sitting on a hill looking down into a valley where several paths lead to a creek. As he sat there, he saw several flocks coming to the same place, large flocks. Astonished he watched as the shepherds came together, right to the same place where the different flocks got all mixed together. That man was baffled because he knew those flocks would need to go their separate ways. Why would they all come together to create such a large amount of work needing to sort the sheep back into their different flocks?

After a while, one of the shepherds left his chat with the others. (sound) Only some of the sheep popped up their ears. (sound) The shepherd started to walk up a path. (sound) All those sheep that had their heads up started to walk through all those other sheep. (sound) Following that sound made by the shepherd’s voice all his sheep went with him from the valley. The shepherd didn’t have to worry about any of his sheep being left behind. He knows that follow his voice.

What do you think Jesus’ opinion is about you? Remember he knows your thoughts. He knows your history, those sins you have committed in your life, and you know what they are. Those sins are things you don’t want anyone to ever know about. But Jesus knows about them. He knows everything about you. Every thought you have ever had, every word you have ever spoken, every deed you have ever done, even the secret things. What do you think his opinion is about you?

Jesus does know you. **I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.** A shepherd will do the best he can to fight off any wild animals. Even though a normal shepherd might say it’s not worth it, Jesus laid down his life for you. That’s what Jesus did for you to give you eternal life. Satan comes, a different voice, and want to lead you down his path that goes to hell. But Jesus steps forward. Jesus doesn’t fight Satan. Instead, Jesus gives his life. By giving his life, he took away the punishment that you deserve for your sins. By laying down his life for you, you no longer have to worry that God is going to punish you for your sins. It doesn’t work that way. In case you have any doubts if Jesus is the one for you to follow, Jesus rose from the dead. He got back up to speak that you will follow.

When Jesus says that he knows you, what that means is this: He doesn’t know you anymore as a sinner who deserves to be punished. When Jesus looks at you now, do you know what he sees? He sees you as someone who has had his or her sins taken away. He sees you as someone who has been forgiven. He sees you as someone who will not be punished, but instead, blessed by God the Father. Jesus sees you as a sheep that belongs in his flock, a sheep that he wants to take care of.

Remember, he is your shepherd. (sound) Today, in this world, he is leading you. You’re not leading yourself, even though it feels that way sometimes. Jesus is leading you. At times, he may lead you to joyful places – times that are good, times of celebration. And, at times, your Shepherd may lead you to frightening places – times that are bad. We call them “valleys.” Jesus, your shepherd, may lead you into a financial-problem valley in the years ahead, or into a health-problem-valley, or into an emotional or personal problem valley. Or, he may lead you into the valley of death. During those times, you may think to yourself, “Nobody knows what I’m going through. Nobody knows how I feel.” During those times listen to Jesus’ voice and he will lead you through.

We trust him. We don’t always understand him. But I don’t think sheep ever really understand what their shepherd is doing. Most of the time, sheep have no idea what their shepherd is doing—why the shepherd is taking them here. Sheep have no idea. But the shepherd knows his sheep; he does what is best for them.

Jesus knows you. You and I often times have no idea why he leads us to the places he does. But we know that he loves us. He loves you with a love that you will never fully be able to understand. That love caused him to lay down his life for you. The sound of his voice shows the way to go. He feet march to victory. Follow his voice. Trust him. Amen.

Points to consider as an individual or with a small group:

* Describe the depth at which Jesus knows you.
* What two testimonies should have convinced Jews of Jesus’ day that he really is the Son of God?
* What great comfort does Jesus give to people who, like sheep, are prone to wander?
* What is Jesus’ voice? (It is a specific thing.)
* Evaluate: When we think we are listening to the Shepherd’s voice, we need to listen more intently because it is likely we are only listening to part of his voice.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, our risen Savior, truly you are our Good Shepherd, for you gave your life for us, your sheep. Surely it was your great love for us sinners, who were lost and straying, that moved you to come into this world to live, to die, and to rise again, that we might have the life that does not end. Good Sheperd, we owe you heartfelt thanks and praise and our continual love and devotion for all that you have done ― and still do ― to insure our earthly and eternal welfare.

It is true, we have become our sheep by trusting that you are our Savior and God. Nevertheless we must confess that we still have a rebellious Old Adam that is stubborn and sinful and continually leads us astray. Therefore we need your loving patience as our Good Shepherd to deliver us from our sinful ways, to protect us from our own foolishness, and to forgive our many sins. We need you to take the evils and dangers that beset us and turn them to our good. We need you to hear and answer our prayers. And we need to hear and heed the sound of your voice as you speak to us in Holy Scripture. Do not on account of our sins and stubborness turn away from us.

Our Shepherd, by your continual presence comfort and cheer us in every journey we must make through the dark, shadowy valleys of this life. Satisfy us with green pastures of your Word and there nourish our faith. Quench our thirst for righteousness with the refreshing streams of salvation. When we are oppressed on every hand by troubles, distress, temptations, sickness, sin, and heartache ― yes, when life seems too difficult to endure ― teach us to turn our eyes of faith to you, the Good Shepherd, and to cast all our cares upon you. Answer our anxious cries, for only you know what is best for us. Refresh us with your help and guidance, your protection and healing.

Especially when we walk through the valley of death itself, be with us, Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. Dispel the gloom that surrounds us with the bright promise of salvation, filling us with joy and confidence as one by one we journey from this life to heaven. Cause goodness and mercy to follow us the rest of our days. Hear us, merciful Savior and Shepherd. Amen