

## **Di121 Effective Communication**

### ***Lesson Di121-10 Method: Using Familiar Objects***

If you wanted to explain something new, like a mobile phone, to a primitive group of people, how would you do it? Show them a phone, right? Even so, how would you make them understand it, using just words? When Jesus communicated the truth about his mission and his Father, he often talked about objects very familiar to his audience. One of his favorite objects to teach about was a sheep. This lesson discusses two different stories in which Jesus used sheep as objects to convey spiritual truth. Without explaining exactly what familiar thing stood for what unfamiliar thing, Jesus allowed the listener to discover the truth intended by the comparison.

Jesus told the Pharisees this parable: “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent” (Luke 15:3-7).

Jesus tells this story to defend the fact that he spent time with tax collectors and sinners. The religious leaders objected to his behavior. They believed they had no need to change their ways and repent. Jesus had a greater purpose than his own defense. Using the picture of a lost sheep he contrasted God’s love with the unloving attitude of the Pharisees. In those times everyone knew that sheep liked to wander and got lost. A shepherd then had to find them. The shepherd in the story rejoiced, because the story was really not about sheep, but about people who had wandered from God.

Who was the shepherd of the story? Certainly it was Jesus, who spent little time with the many persons who considered themselves righteous. Instead he sought out the sinners and spent time with them. God sent Jesus into the world to seek lost sinners. Believers can also be shepherds who seek the lost. How did Jesus communicate this truth? He used the habits of a very common animal, a sheep. And he told a parable that made his position very clear, without addressing the leaders directly.

Jesus used another story about sheep to make a statement about his mission to those seeking truth. He said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:7-10).

Jesus called himself the gate to the sheep pen. Here was another common object that everyone understood. The pen protected the sheep, and the shepherd used the gate to enter it and care for them. Those who intended to harm the sheep climbed in by a different way than the gate. When we enter the body of Christ by believing in Jesus, we experience life and not death. The thieves and robbers represent Satan and those who intend to kill and destroy people’s lives.

Jesus continued: “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep” (John 10:11-13).

Here Jesus called himself the Good Shepherd. The reason is that he cared deeply for his people. In fact he laid down his life to defeat Satan and his plans. Some leaders, even in the church, are like hired workers. When problems come, they flee for their lives and abandon the sheep. Or they take what belongs to the sheep by crafty means and then leave them to survive on their own. They don’t really love the sheep enough to suffer for them.

“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and to take it up again” (John 10:14-18).

Jesus is our good shepherd because he knows each of his people by name. He has a close relationship with all believers. When he spoke about sheep from another fold, he meant non-Jewish followers that he would bring into his Father’s kingdom. In the end there will be one shepherd and one flock. Jesus even speaks of his voluntary death for his sheep and his resurrection.

In this lesson we see how Jesus used sheep, a shepherd, and a sheep pen, all familiar to the people of his day. Using these objects, he spoke of his love and the plan he had received from his Father. His purpose in all this was to defend his actions in spending time with lost sinners, but not only that. At the same time, he was teaching his followers that they too must seek out unbelievers and help them to repent and enter God’s kingdom. He wants believers to become shepherds who love and care for other Christians. We are all his sheep, who must learn to hear his voice. Then we will experience abundant life.

This story is **important** because it demonstrates how Jesus used familiar objects of a shepherd and his sheep to teach believers that they too must seek the lost. We must help them to be saved and to know Jesus’ voice, even though we may be criticized in the process.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that Jesus communicated using common ordinary things to impart spiritual truth to his disciples.

Let’s **review** this lesson—

1. What behavior of sheep did Jesus use in his story that everyone knew was true? [Pause]  
A. If you said, “Sheep like to wander and get lost,” you are correct.
2. What three statements did Jesus make about himself, related to sheep? [Pause]

A. If you answered that Jesus said, “I am the gate for the sheep, I am the good shepherd, and I lay down my life for the sheep,” you answered correctly.

3. Who was Jesus referring to by the thieves, robbers, and the wolves that harm the sheep?

[Pause]

A. If you said that Jesus was referring to Satan and his demons who oppose believers, you are right.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to it enough times to memorize the stories about sheep from Luke and John. Tell them to someone who has not heard them before. Then ask them this question, “What is the reason we should rejoice like this shepherd, when the lost is found?” Answer: We should have the same love for the lost as Jesus had for them. We should act as good shepherds today, willing to sacrifice to protect and care for other believers.