

John 10:1-10 “Amen, Amen, I tell you: Anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the door, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. ² The one who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ The doorkeeper opens the door for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own sheep, he walks ahead of them. The sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ They will never follow a stranger, but will run away from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.” ⁶ Jesus used this illustration in speaking to the people, but they did not understand what he was telling them. ⁷ So Jesus said again, “Amen, Amen, I tell you: I am the door for the sheep. ⁸ All who came before me^[a] were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ I am the door. Whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹⁰ “A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly

Dear Christian Friends,

Today is Good Shepherd Sunday, the day we celebrate the shepherding love of Jesus. But most of us don't own sheep or have a great deal of familiarity with them like people of centuries past or even other parts of the world still today. And even if we understand the general idea of a shepherd, we so often fail to appreciate the illustration of Jesus being the *Good Shepherd*. So today, let's start by using an illustration that most, if not all, of us can relate to: owners caring for their pets.

I'm talking mostly dog and cat owners, though I'm sure that owners of other kinds of pets would certainly agree. These pets of ours become like family. And even as they become nearer and dearer to us over time, they become more and more reliant on us for everything. And the more they rely on us, the more opportunities there are to care for them, give to them, and, dare I say, spoil them.

Yes, it has been known to happen, you know the type. (Or maybe you are the type.) In fact, sometimes, the way we dote on our pets can get quite ridiculous. Let me share some examples. These are from a list¹ of 30 of the most *ridiculous* dog and cat items that people purchase for their pets. First up is the **Purr Detector Collar**: This collar is for people who want to know if their cat is purring without actually listening to the cat, touching the cat, or being close to the cat at all. In other words, *totally* practical.

Or how about **Pet Jewelry**? Surely, a sign of the apocalypse, stuff like this actually exists. All I can think of is that there are millions of animals who would love a warm home and food while Pepe le Poodle is wandering around with Swarovski crystal hair clips and Tiffany necklaces.

Here's another one: **Crooning for Cats**. **Teyus Music**, created by musician David Teie, has made a series of songs made specifically for the enjoyment of cats. Based on cats' physiological traits and instincts, each song is designed to convey a particular mood and feeling for the feline listener — a “meow” mix, of sorts.

The Bow-Lingual Translator is certainly a must-have for every dog owner. Apparently, it analyzes your dog's barks to determine which emotions your pooch is feeling: happy, sad, frustrated, etc. It then provides a written phrase that represents what your dog might say if only it could speak, like, “What is wrong with you that you spent your money on this thing?”

Of course, not wanting to leave out cat owners, **The Meow-Lingual Translator** is also available. Takara Tomy — creator of the Bow Lingual Translator — has you covered on that front as well. Now you no longer have to wonder if your cat is plotting your demise, as this will translate those purrs and hisses into the sound of wasted money.

But if dog and cat-tech are not your thing, and your interest runs a little more toward fashion, not to worry. For you, there is **Pawlish**. On the plus side, this product is safe for animals. On the negative side, this product exists and people actually use it.

And finally, for those who just can't get close enough with their pets, introducing the

¹ <https://twentytwowords.com/ridiculous-pet-products/>

Pupoose Dog Sling Carrier. Do you consider your pet more of an accessory than a companion? Well, then you should know that pet purses are *so* last year. This contraption will allow you to sling them around with you while you also lose their respect in the most fashionable way possible. I know. It's all rather ridiculous, isn't it, what some people will do for their pets?

But this starts to give an idea of what a shepherd must do for the sheep. The care, the vigilance, the sustenance, the protection, the comfort that shepherds provide for their sheep. As ridiculous as it sounds, shepherds treat their sheep almost as their own children. Without a shepherd, sheep wouldn't survive.

Of course, if Jesus is our shepherd, then that makes you and me...well, we must be sheep, right? Have you ever thought of what we're admitting about ourselves then? I mean, finish the phrase: "Strong as an ...(ox)"; "graceful as a ...(swan)"; "ferocious as a ...(lion)"; "(blank) as a sheep!" Dumb, helpless, weak.

Yes, that describes us pretty well, doesn't it? Oh, we may not like that description, but it's true. Think about it. If Jesus wasn't our shepherd, where would we be? What would we be doing? We'd only have two choices: we'd be either 1) following false shepherds looking to destroy us or 2) following our own instincts and feelings. And, finally, how good are they...really?

It makes sense that we should disregard and eliminate all those Bible teachings and applications that make people uncomfortable. After all, then more people would come to church. Our feelings tell us that we can get to heaven on our own. After all, I'm pretty good. Better than a lot of other people. Our instincts tell us that it doesn't really matter what other people. After all, their entitled to their opinions and interpretations. Who am I or who is anybody else to say what is right or wrong. Our hearts question God's power and presence in our lives. After all, bad things are happening. Life is tough. The days are lonely. And didn't say that I'm supposed to be **having life to full!?!?**

No, our instincts and feelings are completely untrustworthy. That's because they're produced right inside our own sinful heads and hearts. Our feelings, our instincts go directly against the Word of God, and they lead us astray, down paths of sadness and destruction: *It's only a*

little sin, it can't really hurt you. If it feels good, maybe it's really okay after all. God couldn't have really meant that. Maybe the Bible is wrong.

Yes, if we follow our own feelings and instincts, rather than follow the Good Shepherd, we can be absolutely certain that we will wander from the truth and become lost. And when it comes to wandering and lost sheep, they usually end up, in a word, *dead!* For you and me...dead eternally.

But for sheep of the Good Shepherd life is good. Why? Because Jesus gives you everything you need. He feeds you, he clothes you, he comforts you, he protects you. He cares for more than owner's their pets, more than regular shepherds their sheep. In fact, our Good Shepherd loves you so much, it's ridiculous. When you couldn't live on our own. He lived for you. When you couldn't pay the price for your sin. He paid it for you with his own blood. When your death wouldn't have counted for anything...this is how ridiculous he is...he even laid down his life for you. And when we try to follow our own feelings and instincts, when we wander from the path to heaven, the path he's leading us on, he takes his shepherd staff, reaches out and pulls us back.

Yes ***we all like sheep have gone astray, we all have sinned***, but God laid our sin on Jesus, the Good Shepherd. And then he did the most ridiculous thing. Jesus, the Shepherd, willingly made himself into a sheep led to the slaughter so that you and I would know forgiveness rather than failure, peace rather than chaos, safety rather than fear, confidence rather than timidity, and eternal life rather than eternal death. That's what makes him our Good Shepherd, the ridiculous...the ridiculously *good*. ***A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*** ¹¹ ***"I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep (vv. 10,11).*** Peter put it this way, ***He himself carried our sins in his body on the tree so that we would be dead to sins and alive to righteousness. By his wounds you were healed.*** ²⁵ ***For you were like sheep going astray, but you are now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (1 Peter 2:24,25)***

But the most amazingly ridiculous thing of all, is that after laying down his life for you and me, he didn't stay dead. A little later in John 10, Jesus says, ***This is why the Father loves me,***

because I lay down my life so that I may take it up again.¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have the authority to lay it down, and I have the authority to take it up again. This is the commission I received from my

Father.” (vv. 17,18). Yes, he who laid down his life, also took it up again. How do we know we shouldn't run after all the religious leaders of our age and ages past? How do we know Jesus is truly the only shepherd, the Good Shepherd, that we should trust and follow? Only Jesus has proven he really is the Lord of both life and death. He came back from the grave, for you to bless you with the most ridiculous of gifts.

Just look at Psalm 23, the psalm that describes the doting and loving gifts for you from the Good Shepherd. He will continue to keep you from want. He will keep restoring your soul, through the green pastures of his Word and the nourishing streams of his Gospel. He will keep guiding you in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. And even when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you needn't fear any evil, because he is with you. Even in the presence of your enemies, he will make you so secure you can sit down and have dinner in complete security. Truly your cup runs over! Surely goodness and love will follow you all the days of your life, and when it is all over you will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. That's abundant life now. That's abundant life forever. That's ridiculous...but true...and it's all your yours by grace through faith from Jesus the Good Shepherd, *your* Good Shepherd. **Amen.**