

## “I Am the Door” // John 10:1–9 // “I AM” #3

### Announcement (Sunday only)

We have an amazing, exciting week coming up. We’re hosting services on some of our college campuses, and of course next week we are expecting, by God’s grace, for the place to be packed out. If you haven’t already, I hope you’ll invite somebody to come with you. No one should come alone. This is the one time a year people are most open to receiving an invitation to go to church—so, use that.

And to that end, let me call you to participate in our **Easter prayer focus that we’ll be doing all week long during Passion Week. It kicks off tomorrow, March 25, with a church-wide day of fasting, and then each day from there through Sunday, April 7, we’ll journey together to the cross and beyond the empty tomb over the next 14 days by praying through the last words that Jesus spoke on the way to the cross and from the tomb.** These words reveal Jesus’ heart not just for us, but the world, and so they are a great way to focus your prayers. You’ll get a prompt to guide you each day on our app. **Do you use this? If not, you should. So helpful.** As always, you can learn more about this and get info on all of our Easter services on our app or on our website ([summitchurch.com/easter](http://summitchurch.com/easter)).

### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

**John 10, if you have your Bibles. You can put up that PIC...**

**My wife used to have a picture up in our house of famous and iconic doors. Do you recognize this one?** It’s the entry door to one of the most famous residences in the world: 10 Downing Street, the home of the British prime minister. Benjamin Disraeli, Winston Churchill, Margaret Thatcher, and Tony Blair have all lived behind that door. This particular door was designed in 1772, made of thick, beautiful black oak with these big Georgian panels, except—what you are looking at in this picture is no longer the original 1772 door, because in 1991, an IRA pipe bomb that was detonated a few hundred yards down the street convinced the British government to replace the historic wooden door with a bulletproof replica. So, what you’re looking at in this picture looks like beautiful English black oak, but it’s actually blast-proof steel. And the little gold letter box no longer works—they don’t want people to be able to slide in little bombs or anything.

And, if you look closely, you’ll see that there’s no longer a keyhole in this door and that little doorknob there in the middle doesn’t turn. The **door can only be opened, now, from the inside.** And the security guard who stands just inside the door opens it only to those the prime minister wants to let in.

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<sup>1</sup> Works consulted: Tim Keller, “I Am the Shepherd,” November 29, 1998, Redeemer Presbyterian; Ryan Ingram, “Jesus Is the Gate,” undated MP3, Living on the Edge; John McArthur, “I Am the Door,” July 27, 2014, Grace to You; Tyler Staton, “I Am the Gate,” January 22, 2023, Bridgetown Church; Josh Moody, *John 1–12 for You*; Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*; Grant R. Osborne, *John: Verse by Verse*; and others as noted throughout.

**We are looking at the I AM statements of Jesus**—seven times in the Gospel of John where Jesus takes the loftiest name of God in the Old Testament—I AM (Yahweh)—claims it for himself, and then attaches that name to one of our greatest areas of brokenness or need. And today, we come to the third of those statements: **John 10:9: “I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.”**

**Doors (or gates) are a big deal in Scripture.** (You’ve probably never done a study of doors in the Scripture, but you might consider it.)

- **Genesis, for example,** tells us that after Adam and Eve sinned, angels were placed at the entry gate to the Garden of Eden with flaming swords in their hands to bar re-entry. (By the way, I’ve always thought the ultimate *Indiana Jones* movie would be him finding that gate with those angels and the Garden of Eden behind it—way better than the *Crystal Skull* or the *Dial of Destiny* or any of the dumb stuff they’ve come up with after Indi raided the lost ark and found the Holy Grail. But, I digress...)
- **Then there’s the door to Noah’s ark**—Genesis says that the ark God had Noah build to save himself and a selection of the animals had only one door, and that after Noah’s family and all the animals went through it safely, God himself shut it.
- **One of the most significant features of the temple’s design was the singularity of the doors.** The temple wasn’t built like our church with multiple entry and exit points—no fire codes to deal with back then.
  - **There was only one gate** through which people could enter the tabernacle courtyard. It was covered by a thick curtain, and the first thing you encountered upon entering the temple was the bronze altar, on which sacrifices for sin were offered.

The message? “There is one way to get to me, and it’s through this altar.”

- **Then there was the door into the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant was,** which was also covered by a thick curtain of blue and purple and scarlet. Only the high priest could pass through this door, and only once a year on the Day of Atonement when he sprinkled the blood of a sacrificed lamb on the mercy seat on top of the Ark of the Covenant. If anyone else ever tried to enter that area by any other way for any other reason at any other time, they were struck dead on the spot. Very interestingly, in front of the entry to the Holy of Holies were carvings of angels standing guard, and another two on top of the mercy seat, symbolic of those angels with flaming swords that guarded the entry back into the Garden of Eden.

So, doors were a big deal—which makes Jesus’ claim here all the more significant. Let’s read the conversation in John 10 where Jesus makes this claim.

(The context for this conversation, by the way, in case you forgot from last week, is that Jesus has just forgiven a woman caught in adultery and just given sight to a blind man. The Pharisees had responded very negatively to these two miracles: They resented Jesus’ power on the one hand, and showed an utter callousness for the forgiven woman and the healed man on the other.)

So, in these stories we’re seeing a contrast between Jesus’ heart for people and the Pharisees’ heart for them—or lack of heart, I should say. And so, Jesus says: **1 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. 2 But he who enters by the door is the**

shepherd of the sheep. 3 To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. 5 A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.”

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

7 So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. 8 All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. 9 I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.”

In those days, there were two kinds of sheepfolds: CITY sheepfolds and COUNTRY sheepfolds, and Jesus draws on the imagery of both to make his point:<sup>2</sup>

**City sheepfolds were big and communal.** At night, shepherds would bring their flocks into one big communal sheep pen where a paid sentry would stand guard while the shepherd went out with his buddies or got a good night’s sleep somewhere. As many as five or six flocks at a time were kept together in the pen. If you ever go to Israel, you can see the ruins of some of these. In the morning, the shepherd would come by to pick up his flock. And of course you ask, “Well, how would he separate out his sheep from the others?”

Great question. You may not know this, but sheep have remarkably discerning hearing. They have notoriously bad eyesight, yes, and they are pretty stupid, but they have really good hearing. And so when the shepherd would call out to his sheep, only his sheep responded, and the rest stayed put.

Thieves would sometimes try to steal sheep by dressing up like the shepherd and impersonating him. And here was the thing: They could usually fool the guard—they’d wear a hood, identify themselves by the shepherd’s name. The real problem was fooling the sheep. The sheep recognized the difference between the voice of the stranger and the voice of the true shepherd. And that’s what Jesus says in vv. 3–4. *My sheep recognize my voice and follow me, and they will not respond to the voice of an impostor.*

**So, those were the city sheepfolds. There were also country sheepfolds,** and they looked more like this: **PIC.** Out in the countryside, someone would throw up a small ad hoc pen. Anybody could use them, but these pens usually had no door, which meant the shepherd slept in that little gap. He was the door. He kept thieves or wild animals from coming in. Sometimes thieves would try to sneak over the walls while the shepherd slept, to get at the sheep. Getting over the wall was pretty easy; it was getting the sheep out that was the problem. Sheep are heavy, and it was nigh unto impossible to get their fat rear ends over the wall without the sheep making a ton of noise. “Let go of me, you baaaaaaad man.” (Sorry, I’m a dad. That’s a dad joke.)

That’s what Jesus means in vs. 1 when he says that one who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. Jesus was saying, “These Pharisees are like the thieves trying to climb over the walls and steal the sheep. And they are the ones imitating the voice of the Shepherd. But those with ears to hear and eyes to see—like this forgiven woman and this blind man—they recognize that I am the true Shepherd, and they follow me. They recognize that I’m the only way back into God’s pasture. **I’m the door** back into the presence of God.”

So here’s what we see in all that. We see, first:

### 1. The Way of Salvation

<sup>2</sup> Insight from David Jeremiah

**Jesus is the Door.** He's the one gateway back into the presence of God. Just like there was one entry point into Noah's ark through which Noah and his family could enter the shelter of the ark and be saved, and just like there was one way to safely enter the temple courtyard, to come by way of the altar, and just like there was only one entry into the Holy of Holies—one time a year on the Day of Atonement with the blood of a sacrifice in your hand—Jesus is the one door into the pasturelands of God.

In fact, when you start to see all the imagery around the death and resurrection of Jesus, it's pretty overwhelming. When Jesus died, the curtain that guarded the door into the Holy of Holies was ripped in two. It was symbolic of the fact that Jesus' torn body was now the entryway back into the presence of God. His blood was sprinkled on the heavenly mercy seat so that we could come back into God's presence.

And remember how I told you that when Adam and Eve were driven out of the presence of God at the Garden of Eden, God had put angels with flaming swords in front of the garden to bar their entry, and images of those angels were put over the mercy seat on the Ark of the Covenant—one on each side—and, in front of the Holy of Holies—also, one on each side?

Well, a little detail that John includes about the Resurrection that most people overlook is that when Mary first got to the tomb, "She saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet" (John 20:12). Two angels! One at the head and one at the feet. Do you see what's being recreated? Jesus' resurrected body is the new mercy seat. He'd taken the flaming sword of God's judgment in our place, and now he's the door through which we can reenter the Garden of God's Presence and come boldly to the throne of grace for help anytime we need it.

I know it's popular today to say that God is like a mountain—there are many ways to the top but they are all headed the same direction. I've

got my way, you've got your way; that different religions may call God by different names and have slightly different rules, but they all basically teach the same thing and are headed to the same place—but do you see how out of sync that is with what the Bible teaches?

There's always only one door, and God's in charge of it, and the most terrible judgment—death itself—for those who attempt to enter by any other way.

Which leads me to the second thing we see in Jesus' claim to be The Door:

## 2. A Claim to Exclusivity

Jesus said, I AM THE door. Not A door, but THE door. I AM the one door to Noah's ark. I AM the one door to the Holy of Holies. And maybe it feels mean or arrogant or judgmental to say that, but it's not mean or arrogant or judgmental to say that if it's true. I'm not in charge of the door—God is.

*I haven't told this story in a while, but it's a classic...*

- Years ago, before I was married, I was taking a flight from Ft. Lauderdale, where I was serving as a youth pastor, back to Greensboro. It was a red-eye flight, and there were only three of us in the gate area when I got there. One was an elderly man who looked at least 80. Or maybe 180, I couldn't tell. But he didn't seem long for the earth—one foot in the grave, the other on a banana peel. The other was a beautiful young woman in her early 20s. At the time I was young and single, long before I'd met Veronica, so I prayed about where God wanted me to sit—it felt like ice cream/spinach—and I mysteriously found my feet leading me to sit next to the young woman. I found out she was from Chile, down in South America, and turned out she was on her way back to Cambridge, Massachusetts and Harvard University—but was stopping to see some friends in Greensboro first. Well, I had just graduated from Campbell University, known around the world

as the “Harvard of the Sandhills,” so I felt right there that we had a connection.

- Her name was Berta. Not Bertha, but with a Chilean flare: “Berrrrta.” We started talking about what we were doing with our lives, and I told her how Jesus had changed my life, and how I now wanted to spend the rest of my life telling other people about him—my motives were at least partially right, here. And she was so full of questions, asking me how I arrived at this certainty, how it changed my life, and so forth. Then she said, “You know, at Harvard I am around some of the most driven, intelligent men in the world. But I don’t think I’ve ever heard any of them speak with such conviction and winsomeness about anything ... and I find that deeply attractive.” And I thought, “Well, this is awesome! She’s going to get saved; we’re going to get married. This is going to be an awesome story to share at conferences about how we met.” We sat next to each other on the plane and kept talking about Jesus for the entire journey, and as we began our descent into Greensboro, I thought I had better close the deal (for Jesus). And I said, “Well, would you like to receive Jesus as your Savior?”
- And then, to my surprise, honestly, she said, “No ... you know, that kind of stuff has just never worked for me. I am so happy that you have found your peace in Jesus, but I relate to my god in a totally different way.”
- So, I said, “Berrrrta, I don’t think you understand. Jesus said in John 14:6 that he was not ‘a way’ to God, but ‘THE way.’ He’s the only way of salvation.”
- She said, “Yeah, but it just doesn’t fit me. We all have our own way and my way is good for me.” And I kept saying, “But Berrta, look at what he said.” And she said, “Surely you are not saying that there’s only one way to come to God—your way?”
- And I affirmed that that was indeed exactly what I was saying—except it wasn’t me saying it, it was Jesus saying it.
- “That has to be the most arrogant, closed-minded thing I’ve ever heard someone say. I can’t believe anyone today would be so bigoted as to think that there was only one way to God.” I sat there, honestly a little dumbfounded, slowly unwinding the

wedding plans. But I was trying to figure out what to say. And then the pilot came on the little intercom and announced our final descent into Greensboro, and I had an idea.

- “Berta,” I said, “I sure am glad the pilot of this airplane doesn’t look at the airport the way that you do truth.” She said, “What do you mean?” I said, “Say he comes on the PA and announces, ‘You know, I am sick of that arrogant little “control tower” always telling me where and how I’ve got to land this 737. That just doesn’t work for me anymore. I’m an open-minded pilot, so today I am going to attempt to land this aircraft upside down on the interstate. Or, nose first on the tip of the Bank of America building.’”
- She said, “That’s not a fair comparison.” I said, “Yes, it is. And that’s Campbell, 1; Harvard, 0, by the way, if you’re keeping score.”
- As the words came out of my mouth, I knew that I wasn’t doing what Peter commanded us to do in 1 Peter 3:15, to answer those who object to what we say “with gentleness and respect.” And I hope that my brashness didn’t create further obstacles in Berta’s heart to receiving the gospel. But honestly, y’all, I still stand by that comparison.
- And today, I’m proud to announce that she’s part of our Summit en Español campus. Just kidding. But wouldn’t that be a cool part of the story? Not yet.

Here’s the point: **It’s not mean or arrogant to say that Jesus is the only door if HE says he’s the only door.** If he is God, the I AM, then he gets to make the rules about salvation. It’s HIS door. It’s his runway of salvation.

In fact, I think it’s arrogant to say that you can enter God’s presence any old way you choose. That would make you the author of salvation. But he’s the author of salvation. He’s the I AM. The reason I needed I AM is because I AM NOT. He is because you aren’t.

Saying you can get to God any old way you choose makes you, Jesus says, not an open-minded person, but an attempted thief and robber.

The wise person recognizes the voice of the Shepherd calling out the one way of salvation and humbly follows him.

*And that leads to #3...*

### 3. An Insight into Conversion

Well, as if Jesus were not being offensive enough, he says, “Furthermore, in order to recognize the voice of the true Shepherd, God has to give you ears to hear.”

Look at **vs. 4**: “The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 5 A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.”

That raises the question: *Why is it that some people recognize the voice of Jesus and others don't? Why did the woman caught in adultery and the man born blind believe in Jesus and the Pharisees do not?* I mean, think about it: Who was more theologically trained—the Pharisees, or the adulterous woman and the blind man? Who was more morally upright? In both cases, the Pharisees. And yet, they didn't recognize the voice of Jesus.

Where do the ears to hear come from? This is one of the most offensive parts of the gospel. God has to give you ears to hear it. This was the meaning of the healing of the blind man. *The man did not have astigmatism. He did not need a pair of glasses.* He was blind. God and God alone gives spiritual sight. The man healed of blindness even recognized it—he said, “I didn't heal myself of blindness, only God could do that. The only thing I know is once I was blind, and now I see.”

This was a direct insult to the Pharisees who thought that their superior morality and superior intellect would give them the ability to understand. Jesus says, no, to discern spiritual truth requires a spiritual gift, a gift that can only come from God. You are too sinful

and too blind for your intellect to figure things out. You need supernatural illumination.

Here's how he said it in **John 6:44**: “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.” If you are attracted to Jesus, it's because the Father drew you. NO ONE comes to Jesus unless the Father draws him.

Paul said it this way in **1 Cor 12:3**: “No man can say Jesus is Lord except in the Holy Spirit.” (Meaning, if there is some recognition in you that Jesus is Lord; if there is a desire to be near him, to follow after him—that can only come from the Spirit of God.) When Peter recognized Jesus as the Messiah, Jesus did not say, “Way to use your intellect, Peter. Your logic is flawless!” Instead, he said, “Peter, flesh and blood has not revealed this to you—in other words, your flesh didn't figure this out—only my Father in heaven reveals that.”

Now, some of you say, “Well, does that take away my freedom of choice?” No. It's still yours to choose. The analogy I always use is this: Imagine there's a man who is genuinely insane; he thinks he is Spiderman, and he's standing on the top of a thirty-story building. You approach him and say, “Don't jump; you don't have web-shooters in your wrists. You will fall to the ground and die.” But the man genuinely believes he's Spiderman. What's he going to choose to do, every single time? To jump. Say then, that you had the ability to restore his sanity. Maybe there was a serum you could come up behind him with and inject into his arm, and his right mind is suddenly restored to him. Now, you offer him that same choice: You can jump, and die, or walk back down here with me to safety. Now what is he going to choose, every single time? He'll choose to come with you to safety. In both moments, he is choosing freely; the difference is that the first choice came out of an insane mind; in the other, it came from a sane one. The choice is always yours, but spiritual sight belongs to God.

“Well then,” you say, “why doesn’t God give spiritual sight to everyone?” And, admittedly, there is some mystery here, because, listen: The Bible always puts the blame on resisting the voice of the Holy Spirit on us, never on God’s sovereign will. Never. For example, **Matthew 23:37**: Jesus looks out over Jerusalem and laments, “Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets ... to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!” Not “I was not willing,” but “YOU weren’t. I was.”

And I know that at this point you might feel like your head is about to explode. *We can only come to Jesus if the Father draws us; we only recognize his voice if the Father gives us ears to hear; but if we don’t recognize his voice, the resistance is in us, not in him.* You say, How can both of those things be fully true?

Good question. At this point I’ll only pass on to you the wise words of my father, who said to me when I first came home from Bible college with my first-year theological knowledge and all these questions about God’s sovereignty—I laid out all these deep truths to Dad and said, “Dad, I just don’t understand how all these things work together,” and he said, “Son, well, for 2,000 years people a lot smarter than you and me have been trying to figure that out, and they haven’t done it yet. I doubt that you’re the one who is going to figure it all out. So, just do what the apostles did in Acts—PREACH JESUS.” And so that’s what I’ve done ever since.

There’s a lot of things I don’t understand—and the mysteries of God’s providence are at the top of that list—but there are some things I do understand. And I know that Jesus said he is the only door of salvation. So I hold these two things in tension when I preach: On the one hand, only Jesus gives spiritual sight. And on the other—if you haven’t come to Jesus, that’s on you, not on him. He invites “whosoever will” to come, which means you can come today if you only choose.

That means I pray hard, to HIM—“Jesus, only you can give spiritual sight”; and then I preach and plead hard, to YOU—I say, “Look to Jesus, and be saved. Whosoever will may come. The choice is up to you!”

#4. *In Jesus’ claim to be The Door, we have...*

#### 4. A Promise of Protection

Again, vs. 9: “I am the door (Jesus says). If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.”

Listen: The life of a sheep is dangerous. Not only are there thieves who want to steal and kill them; wild animals want to devour them. And Jesus said, “Like the Good Shepherd in the country sheepfold, I lay my body down in the doorway between you and all danger. Nothing gets into this pen without my permission.”

I am not going to spend long on this one since we’ll get more into it in the “I AM the Good Shepherd” message in a few weeks—but do you know how much comfort it would bring to you if you lived every day with the assurance that nothing comes through that pen door into your life without his permission? Nothing!

**Ps 84:11**: “No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.” NO good thing does he withhold. That means if he withholds it, it isn’t good; and if he allows it, he plans to use it for good.

When I say that Jesus gives us “a promise of protection,” I don’t mean God promises us a life of ease: follow him and you’ll always get the job; you’ll always receive the healing; the relationship will always work out. People who tell you Jesus promises you that are lying to you.

That's not what I mean. Think about it: Jesus' disciples didn't experience a life of ease. What he promised them is that he'd use all of it for good in their lives. Jesus told Peter, for example, "Peter, Satan has desired to sift you like wheat." (Satan has asked for permission to come into this pen and mess with you.) Now, wouldn't you expect Jesus at this point to say, "And I have forbidden it!"? But no, Jesus says, "But I have prayed for you, that your faith might not fail." As Satan afflicts you, I've prayed that you would grow stronger through it. I am not going to keep you from pain or trial, Peter, but I promise to use it for good.

**Ps 84:11:** "No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly." If he withholds it, it isn't good; and if he allows it, he plans to use it for good.

What if you went through life with that confidence? That at the door of the sheep pen of our life lays an Almighty, ever-watchful, omni-competent Shepherd who will not let anything pass that he does not promise to use for good. I'm telling you, that would change how we approach any and all stressors in our lives. People hurt us. People disappoint us. We'd fail at certain things. But none of that would ever overwhelm us. In all these things we'd be more than conquerors. And that means this setback, this tragedy, this frustration, this difficulty with my spouse or my kids, this illness—all of it is allowed by an ever-watchful Shepherd who has already proven his commitment to me by laying down his life for me and promises now to use it all for good.

I know it may not *feel* like it's good right now, but see, if your Shepherd laid down his life for you, you can be confident that anything he lets into the pen, he will use for good.

Finally, #5, there's...

## 5. An Offer of Abundance

9 "I am the door (Jesus says). If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture."

"Will go in and out." That's freedom. "Find pasture." That's abundance.

Jesus expands on what he means by that in the next verse, **John 10:10:** "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." The Greek word for abundance is *perissos*. It means "over the top." Follow me, and you'll have an "over the top" life.

Let me speak plainly (specifically **high school and college students**—everybody, but especially for y'all): I know for many of you, surrendering to Jesus doesn't feel like the path to freedom and abundance." You're like, "Surrender to Jesus? That means give up all my fun. Surrender my freedom—my ability to choose what I want to do with my body, in my relationships, with my career dreams and my money?" You're terrified to give up control of your life because you think it will lead you to a life of misery!

But friend, it is freedom, and you can trust him, because Jesus is the Shepherd who created you. His pasturelands are the life you were created for!

C. S. Lewis had the best analogy of this. He asks, ***When is a fish most free?*** You don't set a fish free by taking it out of the water and putting it up on the land ... up where the people are, "Up where they walk, up where they run, up where they stay all day in the sun, wanderin' free, wish I could be..."

- **That makes for a catchy song**, and a questionable kids' movie, **but in reality it will kill the fish**. A fish is freest when it is swimming in the habitat it was designed to be in.
- You were created for Jesus—by his design, for his love, to thrive under his rule. That means you will always feel incomplete,

unsatisfied, uneasy, OFF ... until you are in right relationship with him.

And until he lays in front of the pen of your life, you'll be subject to thieves and robbers who only want to kill, steal and destroy. Oh, these thieves and robbers will offer you satisfaction—*I have what you're looking for over here in this career! Or, it's over here in this relationship!* But it never is. It will entertain and tantalize you for a while, but thieves and robbers only lead to greater brokenness and more emptiness. Some of you are there now.

Listen to this: *New York Times* reporter Nicholas Kristof, who has written for years on the global injustice of human trafficking, once attempted to purchase the freedom of two Cambodian prostitutes he'd come across. After a lot of investigation, he'd concluded the only practical way he could get these ladies out was to buy their freedom. Both had been taken into the trade against their will. And maybe you'd say, "Well, I'm not sure this was the best way." Maybe not, but in the moment he felt like this was the only sure way to get these two out.

For the first of them, it was a simple transaction. He paid \$150 to the brothel owner to set her free. But when he tried to pay the price for the second girl, named "Srey-Mom," the owner had figured out she was dealing with a guy with resources, and she demanded more money.

Finally the owner agreed to \$203 as the price for Srey-Mom's freedom. But then, Kristoff said, Srey-Mom told him that she had pawned her cellphone and needed \$55 to get it back.

"Forget about your cell phone!" he said. "We've gotta get out of here. This is a dangerous place." He knew that when the local crime bosses found out what was going on, they would try to stop it. He said, "We have to leave now." But Srey-Mom started crying and refused to leave. He told her that she was going to have to choose between her

cellphone or her freedom, and she ran back to her tiny room in the brothel and locked the door. Even the brothel owner said to her, "You better grab this chance while you can." But Srey-Mom, hysterical now, refused. She only relented when Kristof agreed to buy back her cell phone too. Then she asked for her pawned jewelry to be part of the deal.

Kristof explained, "So we went to get back the phone and the jewelry—which were, I think, never her real concern. Srey-Mom later explained that her resistance had nothing to do with wanting the telephone and everything to do with last-minute fear about whether her family and village would accept her if she returned. The possibility of rejection by her mother was almost as frightening as the idea of finishing her life in the brothel." Her family did, in fact, receive her joyfully. They had assumed she was dead, and they shrieked and hugged and cried. But one year later, Kristof reported, he was devastated to find she was back in the brothel where she is pimped out and regularly financially cheated by her owner. Kristof said it was a combination of a desire for drugs, and a way to pay off new debts, and a way for self-esteem. Prostitutes often are so shattered and stigmatized, he said, that sometimes they feel that the only place they can hold their head high is in the brothel."<sup>3</sup>

It's heartbreaking. Obviously, that industry is one of the cruelest and unjust practices ever inflicted by humans on one another, and we should all be working to end it. But I share this tragic story because it shows us that this broken world damages us—both through our sin and the sin of others upon us, and that damage creates in us a fear that can keep us in bondage to sin. Fear and shame keep us from perceiving the goodness of what's being offered to us, makes us

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<sup>3</sup> Kristof reflected upon the complex emotions that made escape from the brothel so difficult. He said these ladies were being set free so they could return to their home villages in Cambodia. "But will emancipation help them? Or will they, like some other girls rescued from sexual servitude, find freedom so unsettling that they slink back to slavery in the brothels? We'll see." Nicholas Kristof, "[Bargaining for Freedom](#)," NYTimes.com (1-21-04). NYT article follow up, 1 year later: "[Back to the Brothel](#)."

susceptible to the thieves and robbers, and keeps us hiding in our captivity from the one relationship that actually could lead us to life, freedom, and pasture.

But here, in John 10, we have Jesus, the Door. A Good Shepherd who lays himself down at the entryway of our lives to protect us from anything that could harm us. If only we'd trust him!

This Shepherd put himself not just between us and thieves and wild animals seeking to harm us; he put himself between us and the rightful consequences of our sin. After we had voluntarily sold ourselves to sin, and sin and death had a rightful claim upon us, he stood between us and sin and death and said, "To get to them, you'll have to go through me," and he took sin and death in our place.

He stood between us and the consequences of sin and death, and absorbed them into his own body. And when he did, something amazing happened. That curtain blocking the way into the Holy of Holies was torn in two—symbolizing that Jesus' torn body was now the door back into the presence of God, back into the Garden of Eden, back into his pasturelands where sin and death and curse and judgment and abandonment and chaos could not touch us anymore. There is therefore no condemnation, or abandonment, or fear or curse or shame or chaos—for those who are in Christ Jesus. *IN* Christ Jesus ... inside Christ Jesus ... safe behind the walls of Christ Jesus.

9 "I am the door (Jesus says). If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture."

This is an offer for you. Listen! This is the life you were created for; the pasturelands of God's goodness and grace are what your soul craves; the assurance that, "Yea, though [you] walk through the valley of death [you] will fear no evil, because thou art with me, your rod and your staff they comfort me; that you anoint my head with oil and my cup overflows and surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life." This is what awaits you on the other side of that door.

**David Jeremiah** tells the story of how the great Houdini, regarded in his day as "The World's Greatest Escape Artist," had proven able to get out of any confinement—handcuffs, straightjacket, locked caskets, or sealed-up prison cells—in less than a minute.

There was only one recorded instance where Houdini failed to escape. He was touring the British Isles, and in a small town he was invited to escape from the local jail. The cell door looked so ordinary that he thought it was a joke. "I'll be out of here in 30 seconds," he thought. But after two hours of trying unsuccessfully to pick the lock, he gave up. And finally, in exhaustion and exasperation he leaned against the door, conceding failure, and when he did that, to his surprise, the door creaked open!

It hadn't been locked to begin with.

How many of us stay imprisoned behind an unlocked door? Jesus' blood has unlocked the door to your freedom. All you have to do is LEAN on him! Dr. Jeremiah said that one of our Enemy's greatest deceptions is convincing us that, like Houdini, we have to work and strive to unlock the door of salvation—to pick the lock by earning God's love through good works. But all you have to do is lean on Jesus and the door will open. Salvation, you see, is not what you do to save yourself; it's receiving what God has already done for you. Salvation is not about trying, it's about trusting; it's not about striving, but leaning.

Do you want to do that today? Are you ready?