



# Links Players

## FOLLOWERS OF JESUS 4: JESUS' VOICE

“...his sheep follow him because they know his voice.” (John 10:4, NIV)

AT THE REPEATED INSISTENCE OF TIM PHILPOT, who makes his own contribution to this devotional each month, I finally got to Scotland in the summer of 2019, where my wife Laura and I met up with Tim and his wife Sue in Brora, a village of fewer than 2,000 people, but home to a wonderful 18 holes designed nearly 100 years ago by James Braid, a job for which he was paid the mighty sum of £23.

Though I came to love the course for its many enjoyable holes, Brora’s renown these days often rests in the single electric wire that surrounds each green. Why is it there? To keep the sheep off the putting surfaces. These grazers are Brora’s natural lawn mowers, maintaining the rough at a playable height. I would have thanked them personally, but I knew none of them by name.

The opening verses of John 10 are fascinating in several ways. Let’s look at how.

First, Jesus took up the role of shepherd. It’s hard to miss the connection to Psalm 23, where David wrote, “The LORD is my shepherd.” That reference to God is in all caps because the Hebrew is God’s very name, *Yehovah*. Now Jesus was saying that he is the shepherd whose sheep hear his voice.

Second, we are sheep in Jesus’ teaching. In recent context, *sheep* has become a pejorative, a word intended to demean others as mindless followers of the crowd. Jesus never belittled his disciples in this way, but he was making it plain that sheep are indeed followers; they follow the voice of the one they recognize to be their provider and caretaker. Sheep want to follow their shepherd because of what he offers them: food, water, shelter, safety. Sheep may follow the crowd, but only because those nearest the shepherd are following his voice.

Third, Jesus knows every sheep by name. This is where I was helpless at Brora. But Jesus is aware of each of our tendencies and each of our needs. To him, we are never one of the crowd.

Finally, we come to know his voice. Particularly if we are feeding on God’s word in Scripture, we come to know the authenticity of what Jesus is saying. We can sort out truth from error, because we can compare the voices of others with the voice of the one who truly loves us. Does Jesus still talk to people directly today? If he does, you can be sure it will match up with what he has been saying all along.

**Opening questions** What voices have had special significance in your life? How did you know they were speaking wisdom?

**READING** Psalm 23; John 10:1-5; John 10:11-18

### The shepherd (Psalm 23)

What hallmarks of the Lord’s care for us appear here? When we follow the Lord as shepherd, what ends up following us (v. 6)? What is our greatest hope as Christ’s sheep?

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### The shepherd’s voice (John 10:1-5)

What pictures of leading and following show up in Jesus’ teaching? What is the difference between the shepherd’s voice and the stranger’s voice?

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### The shepherd’s work (John 10:11-18)

What is the principal theme of these verses? How do Jesus’ actions compel us to follow him? *Now read John 15:12-14.* How do these verses connect us with Christ in the way we might live our lives as a reflection of his?

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Written by Jeff Hopper ©2020 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study is available here: <https://youtu.be/6xxh2KnXtjs>