#  Candidates Sunday Bible Study – Saying Yes to Jesus

##  ‘I have come that they may

## have life, and have it to the full.’

## John 10:10

The theme for Candidates Sunday 2025 is based around this verse – you may have seen some of the ‘1010’ imagery on social media, posters, etc. Candidates Sunday invites us all to say ‘yes’ to Jesus and his plan for our lives.

The Salvation Army needs people to say yes to spiritual leadership – in their corps as local officers/leaders, as well as in the wider Salvation Army as an employed spiritual leader, a territorial envoy, or as an officer. The Salvation Army has never offered so many routes by which people can explore, follow and be developed in their calling. Never has the need for people to say yes to Jesus been so great.

The first yes that people need to say to Jesus is to his invitation to salvation – to eternal life, life to the full. The text below unpacks and considers the context for Jesus’ great promise. As we explore it together, may we all be challenged both to find ourselves in the story and to accept his call to action.

## Study Focus – John 10:1-18

The passage opens with a clear address by Jesus to the Pharisees (v1). Whilst this passage contains this amazing declaration by Jesus of who he is, the Good Shepherd, and what he has come to do – to bring life – it is not initially directed at the people who say yes to him.

## Pause, Reflect, Discuss

Look back through John 9 to see what is happening here. Why is Jesus speaking to the Pharisees? Think about these key moments in the build-up:

9:1–12 – Jesus heals a blind man

9:13–34 – The Pharisees investigate the healing, and throw the man out of the synagogue

9:35–41 – Jesus tells the Pharisees they are spiritually blind, whilst the blind man is welcomed into a new family

What does the account of John 9 tell us about spiritual leadership and what Jesus thinks about it?

Now re-read John 10:1-18 and make a note of all the things Jesus says about himself. How is Jesus’ leadership different from that of the Pharisees? How should that be reflected in our discipleship and our leadership?

## The Authority of Jesus (John 10:1-7)

The imagery of shepherd and sheep here probably has more to do with Old Testament concepts of leadership than it does with shepherds as people of little importance in Jesus’ day. Either way, the people who heard Jesus will have understood the context – particularly the Pharisees, even if they did not understand the message (v6). Ezekiel 34 has some harsh words for the nation’s shepherds – those who were supposed to be spiritual leaders. The imagery in Ezekiel 34:6 is of sheep wandering, scattered and, worse, with no one looking for them. Written to a people in exile because of their unfaithfulness, in this passage God declares that he himself would be their shepherd (Ezekiel 34:7-10). God promises to bring his sheep home to a good pasture, that he himself will tend them, and that he will search for those who are lost (Ezekiel 34:11-16).

Returning to John 10 we see Jesus as the one with true authority over the sheep – he is both the shepherd (v2) and the gate (v7). He is the one who has come to be with the people, to be their true leader, and the one who promises to lead his people into a life of abundance and blessing.

## Pause, Reflect, Discuss

Consider how Jesus in John 10 fulfils God’s rescue promises in Ezekiel 34. Notice how ‘he calls his own sheep by name’ (v3). Think about – and share if appropriate – what it means for you to realise that Jesus has come to rescue you, to lead you out of a life of confusion and uncertainty, and to lead you into a life of abundance and trust. If you are not yet sure that Jesus has come to rescue you, be assured of his love and purposes for you, share with someone who can help you, and choose to follow him today.

## The Affirmation of Jesus (John 10:8-9)

Jesus calls his sheep by name (v3) and assures us that we can follow him in safety because we know his voice (v4). There is great affirmation here that Jesus has come to look for us and lead us home. He calls us each to follow him. We can only say yes to Jesus because he has first said yes to us.

## Pause, Reflect, Discuss

Take time to rejoice in the affirmation of Jesus over you and your life today. He knows your name. He knows all about your life. Despite everything he knows about your life, he still calls you to follow him.

What does that feel like? It cost Jesus everything to say yes to you. What will it cost you to say yes to him?

## The Abundance of Jesus (John 10:10-13)

The fullness of life that Jesus promises those who will follow him is contrasted with ‘the thief [who] comes to steal and kill and destroy’ (v10a). Jesus is addressing the spiritual leaders of the nation who have not been faithful. But he also reminds us each that when we listen out for the voice of Jesus (v4) there are other voices competing for our attention, promising all kinds of things they cannot and will not deliver, just to keep our focus away from Jesus, on what he wants to say to us and how he wants to use us.

## Pause, Reflect, Discuss

What are some of the distracting voices in your life that keep you from hearing Jesus clearly and following him closely?

These may not necessarily be bad things in and of themselves, but maybe we give them too much time and attention. Perhaps name some of those things and share them with a trusted friend. Ask Jesus to help you hear him clearly and follow him closely.

What does having life to the full mean to you? Is that your experience? Why or why not?

## The Authority of Jesus Again (John 10:14-18)

The passage concludes as it begins, with a reminder of Jesus’ ultimate authority to lay down his life and to take it up again (v18). The passage thus points to Easter and the events of Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection – the ultimate demonstration of his absolute authority over all creation. Whilst we have focused in on this passage for Candidates Sunday – thinking about the abundance and fullness of life to be found in following Jesus, responding to his call upon our lives, and being obedient to that call with his help – it is important to realise that the whole passage is about him, his purposes, his sovereignty, and the lengths to which he was prepared to go to bring us home to himself. However, in contrast with the earlier imagery in Ezekiel 34, Jesus offers a bigger vision of his mission and the mission in which he calls all his disciples to participate. Jesus lays down his life for us (vv15,17), is raised to life for us (v18), invites us into fullness of life with him (v10) and reminds us that there are other people that he wants to find, people that do not yet know him, who cannot hear his voice because of all the other distractions of life (v16). Each of us is invited to share in that mission, to make the Good Shepherd known and to point those who are lost to the only one who can save them.

## Pause, Reflect, Discuss

Jesus has said yes to us in his willingness to suffer and die for us. What does your yes to him look like? What is Jesus asking you to be and to do to fulfil your part in his mission to bring all people home to himself? What competing voices are distracting you from following him and being obedient to his call, whatever that may be both now and in the future? What might happen if the abundant and full life he promises you overflowed into the lives of the people you know who have yet to accept Jesus for themselves?

Jesus promises you ‘life to the full’. What are you going to do with it?