

00:00 ***Beware the Voice of Strangers***

- 00:21 Jesus referred to himself as "the Fine Shepherd," and he referred to his disciples as "sheep." So as his sheep, how do we respond to the voice of our Fine Shepherd? What can we use as an example of how we *should* respond? Well Jesus' own words recorded in John chapter 10 and verses 3 to 5 give us an example. Let's look at his words together. John chapter 10 and verses 3 to 5.
- 01:01 Here, Jesus says: "The doorkeeper opens to *this one* ." Meaning, he opens to the shepherd. "And the sheep listen to his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out. And when he has got all his own out, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice. A stranger they will by no means follow, but will flee from him, because do not know the voice of strangers."
- 01:38 Did you notice there, friends, literal sheep know the voice of their shepherd, and they follow their shepherd, and their shepherd only. Why? Well, Jesus makes it clear; he says: "because they do not know the voice of strangers." Jesus' further words in John chapter 10 help us to appreciate how we can apply this in a spiritual sense, to ourselves today, and to our relationship with him and our Heavenly Father, Jehovah.
- 02:13 Notice in verse 14, where he continues: "I am the Fine Shepherd, and I know my sheep, and my sheep know me." And then over the page, in verse 27, he adds: "My sheep listen to my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." So Jesus is now applying it in a spiritual sense. We need to apply these verses in a spiritual sense ourselves.
- 02:46 In harmony with those words of Jesus, the apostle Peter, at 1 Peter chapter 5 and verse 2, refers to the Christian congregation as " **the flock of God** ". So, if we're going to apply what Jesus said, we're going to apply it to ourselves and our relationship with him and with our Father Jehovah, then we need to be in the flock of God and follow the direction of the Fine Shepherd, Christ Jesus, and listen his voice only.
- 03:22 The Bible account at Genesis chapter 3 verses 1 to 6 doesn't talk about sheep, or a fine shepherd, but it certainly helps us to appreciate where the voice of strangers originated. Now we know the account; we're not going to read it. We know the account; it tells us that Satan the Devil spoke the first lie back in the Garden of Eden, six thousand years ago, when he used a serpent to speak to our first mother, Eve.
- 03:56 By listening to words that **blatantly** contradicted the truth, Eve, and then Adam, sinned. What happened after that? Well, they passed on sin to all their offspring; and not only did they pass on sin, but they passed on all the resulting woes as well. And that's what humans have been experiencing for the last six thousand years.
- 04:22 In John chapter 8 and verse 44, Jesus referred to Satan as "a liar and the father of the lie." So back there, in the Garden of Eden, Eve believed and acted on the lie. So ever since then, Satan has used, not a serpent, but he has used humans to serve as a sounding board to spread his lies.
- 04:54 Open your Bibles with me to Hebrews chapter 13 verse 9. We're just going to look at the first part of that verse. And notice how the Apostle Paul warned against listening to any of Satan's sounding boards. Hebrews 13:9. Here Paul warns: "Do not be carried away by various and strange teachings." Well primarily, who is it that promotes "strange teachings" today? Is it not the *apostates* ? Certainly it is. Apostates promote those "strange teachings" in an attempt to undermine the spiritual balance of Jesus' followers, of his sheep, of Jehovah's people.
- 05:45 At Acts chapter 20 and verse 30, Paul said that apostates "speak twisted things." Why do they do this? Well, they do this to speak half-truths, to withhold details, in an effort to, again, undermine the spirituality of Jehovah's people; to deceive and corrupt Jehovah's people.
- 06:11 At a recent course for traveling overseers at Patterson, the brothers in the course, in the circuit and district work, were asked if the work of the apostates was having a negative effect on the preaching work in their areas, primarily in the house-to-house ministry. Well, interestingly, the consensus among the brothers was that the only real negative effect was on the brothers and sisters in their circuits and districts who **had listened** to the apostate teachings. And usually, it's been via TV documentaries or the Internet.
- 06:58 Sad to say, these very, extremely wicked opposers of Jehovah, and of truth, have succeeded in affecting the spiritual balance of quite a few of our brothers and sisters, who have listened to their poisonous propaganda. In fact, in one congregation in a local circuit, eight publishers were very shaken just a few months ago, because of **watching an apostate-promoted TV documentary** . And this was in spite of the fact that, that very week, the elders had set aside ten minutes of the service meeting, a couple of days before the documentary was aired, to warn the brothers that it was going to be on, and they used material from the Faithful and Discreet Slave to help them to see why it would be dangerous to watch it. And in spite of that, eight publishers were very shaken because they did watch it. So those affected in such ways have not heeded the warnings to **beware** of the voice of apostate strangers.
- 08:12 Proverbs chapter 5 and verse three describes another Stranger. Let's look at that together. Proverbs chapter 5 and verse 3. "For as a honeycomb the lips of a strange woman keep dripping. And her palate is smoother than oil." So you notice there, friends, the stranger here is referred to as a "strange woman".

Now who could that woman be? Well, notice in chapter 7 and verse 5, he continues. He's talking here in the context of verse 5 about the need to develop wisdom and understanding. Why? Well verse 5

says, "to guard you against the woman stranger, against the foreigner who has made her own sayings smooth." In verse 21, "she has misled him by the abundance of her persuasiveness, by the *smoothness* of her lips, she *seduces* him."

- 09:16 Does it not seem clear that this immoral woman it's talking about here is referring to a **prostitute**, who uses smooth and sweet words to lure people into immorality. Well, the fact is, quite a few of our brothers and sisters have been lured into immorality in recent years. Was it worth it? What price did they have to pay for allowing themselves to be lured into immorality? Well, first of all, hopefully, they experienced a troubled conscience. And what else? Could they also have experienced, at least the sisters, and it would affect the brothers as well, an unwanted pregnancy? Have they perhaps acquired a sexually transmitted disease because of their allowing themselves to be lured into the immorality?
- 10:21 And what about when it's a situation where it's adultery, what about the enormous emotional pain experienced by the innocent mate or mates? Yes, one act of immorality of adultery, can inflict pain emotionally that can last an entire lifetime. Is it worth it? And then, of course, worst of all, a damaged or even severed relationship with Jehovah. Yes friends, immorality hurts everyone concerned. So my dear brothers and sisters, make it your goal to stay as far away as possible from the influence of the immoral woman, from immoral people.
- 11:22 Avoid like the plague, association with them and their ways of thinking, their ways of doing things, even indirectly, by listening to debasing music, by watching corrupting entertainment. Whether it be at the theater, or on a video that you can just slip into your VCR at home. Or on the internet, or in magazines or books, or wherever it might be. Why expose yourself to their ways?
- 11:50 Why expose yourselves to things like pornographic material, which is more and more prevalent around the world today? Also, avoid inviting the attention of immoral people by flirting with them, or by immodest dress and grooming, which we talked about earlier in the program this week. **Beware** of the voice of immoral strangers.
- 12:22 Now, all of Jehovah's people, no matter what age group we fit into, need to guard against bad associations.
- 12:29 All of us adults were once teenagers, even though it may have been a long time ago, but we were, and we know what it's like to have the desire to be popular, to be accepted by our peers. And that is exactly why our teenagers today are especially vulnerable to bad associations.
- 12:53 So you young people among us here today, at times your schoolmates are going to ridicule you, they're going to make derogatory remarks about your beliefs, some are going to try to dissuade you from listening to your Christian parents who *love* you and who know what's best for you.
- 13:18 So my dear young friends, think about this: any of your peers who try to weaken you spiritually may say they care about you, they may even say they love you. But it's a fact that they **don't**. And don't believe even for a moment that they do.
- 13:44 Be smart! Don't listen to them! While they may appear to be "cool" - you can even add "sophisticated" to "cool" to make it even more appealing, right? But you know what they are to Jehovah?? They are **physical**, they're **unspiritual**, and they are a **real danger** to you. So you young people, **Beware** of the voice of strangers among your peers.
- 14:22 Now we're talking about association here. We **ALL** need association. We all need communication. We thrive on it. And as Jehovah's people, we enjoy the best of both worlds, so to speak, with our brothers and sisters, don't we? We're experiencing that this very weekend.
- 14:39 But there's another kind of association and communication that we need to talk about, that we all need to beware of.
- 14:48 We've touched on it briefly: **Strangers** who don't respect Bible principles and who like to promote their perversions and their perverse ideas and opinions via the internet.
- 15:03 Now you know how it is: through e-mail or through internet chat rooms, you can communicate with people you don't know in any corner of the earth, in any part of the world. Some of these people may *claim* to be Jehovah's Witnesses, but they're **not**.
- 15:20 One may claim to be a youth to communicate with a youth, but he's not. Another may claim to be of a certain gender, but he's not. So brothers, think about this: Would you invite a stranger into your home without first finding out who he is?
- 15:41 What if there's no way to find out? Would you allow *your children* to be alone with that stranger,

even if you didn't know anything about that person? Of **course not!** And you're thinking: "That's *sridiculous!* Why even ask that question?"

- 15:58 But the fact is that this is an **indisputable** possibility over the internet.
- 16:06 Again, through e-mail or chat rooms, you can receive experiences or comments about our beliefs, information indeed that is generally unverifiable; it may very well be untrue. The comments may also be a cover for spreading **apostate propaganda**. How do you know? Well, you simply may **not** know until it's too late.
- 16:32 And then what about those websites of Jehovah's Witnesses? Well, here again, they may very well be a vehicle for spreading apostate propaganda. Quite a few of them actually are. But what about the websites that are not? What if you know that they have been set up by Jehovah's Witnesses? Maybe you even know the person personally who set up the web page, representing Jehovah's Witnesses. What about those? Well listen to the comments in *Our Kingdom Ministry*, November 97, page 3. That's *Our Kingdom Ministry*, November 97, page 3.
- 17:15 It made the statement: "There is no need for any individual to prepare internet pages about Jehovah's Witnesses, our activities or our beliefs. Our official website, www watchtower - uh - dot watchtower, dot org, presents accurate information for any who want it."
- 17:37 So friends, we want to be very, very cautious about the internet. Notice at P salm 26 and verse 4 how the psalmist, David, expressed his feelings about the very thing we've been discussing. We're talking about how on the internet you can communicate with people anywhere on earth, people you don't know; you may never *get* to know. Notice what the psalmist said, at P salm 26 and verse 4: "I have not sat with men of untruth and with those who hide what they are I do not come in."
- 18:13 How many people out there in the world, especially on the internet, hide what they are? So we need to exercise extreme caution so that we don't find **our** selves personally associating with those who "hide what they are" in various ways. So friends: **Beware** of the voice of strangers via the internet.
- 18:38 Another area where we need to exercise extreme caution is in what we hear in news reports and documentaries. Now, we've touched on documentaries before, where they are promoted by the apostates, and they are becoming more and more prevalent; it's obvious. But sometimes things are presented as truth in the media, but they're not truth, or at least they're not the whole truth, and they're not presented by apostates, and the apostates have no connection with them. Maybe it's just an overzealous reporter trying to make a name for himself and added to that he doesn't like Jehovah's Witnesses, and so he goes out and he spreads lies about them. How do you feel when you hear reports like that? Doesn't make you feel good, does it? In fact, doesn't it get you upset inside? I feel upset inside when that happens, at least temporarily. And we *should* be upset, we don't like to hear things like that.
- 19:35 Something we want to keep in mind, friends, is that ***we don't want to be personally refuting these untruths unless Jehovah's Organization assigns us to do that publicly.*** Now when we talk to people in our ministry and elsewhere and they bring up points about what they have heard or read, sure, then we can present the truth to them. But we don't want to be doing that publicly, because that very often just leads to worse reports about us.
- 20:05 And something we want to keep in mind is the point at John - First John chapter 5 and verse 19, where John said "the **whole world** is lying in the power of the wicked one." Now we know that not every news report is untrue. It would be unreasonable for us to put aside every piece of secular information, otherwise why would we watch the news? Why would we listen to the news and find out what's going on in the world? But we need to keep in mind, because "the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one," it's to be expected that Satan and his demons are going to be **saturation**g the world with untruthful information, even indeed harmful information in these last days. So here again, friends, **Beware** of the voice of strangers via the media.
- 21:00 For us to be protected from these dangers that we've been discussing, we need to understand why sheep don't respond to the voice of strangers. As we discussed earlier, literal sheep have a very **keensense** of who their shepherd is, and who is not. They're thoroughly familiar with their shepherd **only**. Turn your Bible with me to Second Timothy, chapter 1 and verse 13, which helps us to appreciate how we can do the same, how we can be thoroughly familiar with our Shepherd only.

Second Timothy, chapter 1 and verse 13; here Paul admonishes: "Keep holding the pattern of healthful words that you heard from me with the faith and love that are in connection with Christ Jesus." Do you notice? Paul says: "Keep holding the pattern of healthful words."

- 22:01 Well, every language has a distinct pattern of words and grammar. And similarly, The Truth that we found - that we find in Jehovah's word, the Bible, and the truths which have been made clear to us in these last days by Jehovah through his Spirit Directed Organization has a distinct pattern that we learn, that we recognize, and that we come to live by.
- 22:30 This pattern is based mainly on the Bible's theme of the vindication of Jehovah's Sovereignty by means of his Kingdom. So we need to keep this pattern very clear in our minds and particularly in our hearts.
- 22:50 In Galatians chapter 1 and verse 8, the Apostle Paul emphasizes how important it is that we do that. Notice Galatians chapter 1 verse 8. Here, Paul stresses what we need to do if someone presents to us a teaching that doesn't fit into the pattern of truth that's been given to us. Here he says, "However, even if we or an angel out of heaven were to declare to you as good news something beyond what we declared to you as good news, let him be accursed."
- 23:23 So friends, hypothetically, and I repeat, *hypothetically*, even if an *angel* were to come down here and *land on this platform*, today, at *this moment*, and to present something to us that didn't fit into the pattern of truth, what should we be ready to do? We should be ready to say, "**Hold on there, that doesn't fit into the pattern, and I am not going to listen to it!**" Yes, *even if it were one of Jehovah's angels*.
- 24:02 Now look back to literal sheep again. Literal sheep come to know the voice of their shepherd, by hearing it, by studying it, so to speak, right from the time that they are born basically. How do we get to become thoroughly familiar with our Shepherd's voice? Was it not by listening to Jehovah from the time that we are born, so to speak? With many of us, it's the case literally, and with others, the time they were born was for many the time they started studying Jehovah's word recently and that led up to their dedication and baptism today.
- 24:41 How do we do that though, primarily? Well we do it primarily by *reading* Jehovah's word. Now friends, think about it this way. If we miss even one day, where we don't read at least a portion of Jehovah's inspired word, in essence, what we are telling Jehovah is, "Jehovah, I'm sorry, but I don't have time to hear from you today," because this is primarily the way that Jehovah speaks to us, is through his inspired word. So brothers, never allow a day to go by without reading at least a portion of God's Word the Bible. Allow Jehovah to speak to you every day, without fail.
- 25:35 If a little sheep heard the voice of its shepherd, but failed to respond, what could happen? Well maybe the shepherd is saying to the sheep, "There's a wolf in end of the pasture, get in the fold." And what if the sheep is a little defiant, and he says, "My shepherd doesn't know what he's talking about." Well, he could lose his life, right? So the same with us in a spiritual way. By applying what we learn, we show that we have not simply *heard* our Shepherd, but we have *listened* to the voice of our Shepherd, for our benefit, for our protection.
- 26:20 Matthew chapter 17 verse 5 tells us that Jehovah's voice was heard on one particular occasion from heaven, saying with reference to Jesus, "This is my Son, my beloved, whom I have approved. **Listen** to him." So we listen to Jehovah, by listening to the Fine Shepherd, Christ Jesus. And we do **that**, today, by **listening to the Faithful and Discreet Slave**, who Jesus appointed over all his belongings to give us our spiritual food at the proper time. All the abundance of spiritual good things that we receive, including this convention arrangement.
- 27:05 Jesus has also instructed us to shun adultery and fornication, to preach the good news and make disciples, and to do many other things. Are we **listening**? Are we applying what we hear? Notice what Acts chapter 3 and verse 23 emphasizes regarding the importance of **carefully obeying Jesus' voice**, and by extension, obeying Jehovah's voice. Acts chapter 3 and verse 23. Here Paul is basically quoting Moses at Deuteronomy chapter 18 when he says, "Indeed, any soul that does not listen to that prophet," (in other words, the Messiah) "will be completely destroyed from among the people." How important is it that we obey the voice of that prophet? Of the Messiah, Christ Jesus? Our eternal welfare is involved. It means *our life*, to listen to our Shepherd.
- 28:11 In John chapter 10 and verse 5 which we read earlier on, Jesus highlighted how sheep should respond to those who utter *any teaching* that is not in harmony with the truth. Remember, he said the sheep flee. That's what we need to do as well.
- 28:30 You recall the account in, the account of Joseph, the young man Joseph, the account in Genesis chapter 39, where he was employed by the Egyptian official Potiphar. Now when Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph into committing adultery with her, what did Joseph do? He fled, immediately. So friends, like Joseph, **flee** from **any temptation** to relinquish your moral chasteness. No matter from where it comes, **flee** from it.

- 29:07 Young people, flee from the desires incidental to youth that are promoted through the internet, that are promoted through your peers at school. Notice in Second Timothy chapter 4, Second Timothy chapter 4, verses 3-5. Here Paul also warns of the dangers that can affect any age group, young, old, male, female, doesn't matter. In verse three, Paul points out that there was going to be a period of time when people won't put up with healthful teachings, they will want to have their ears tickled as he says. In verse 4 they will turn aside to *false s tori es* . Well that's for people who choose that road for themselves, but what about us?
- 30:05 Verse 5 says, "you though, as you" and you and you and you and me, all of us here today, "keep your senses in all things, suffer evil, do the work of an evangelizer, fully accomplish your ministry." So rather than allowing ourselves to be turned aside by false s tori es, published through the media, or by apostates, or by anybody else, we want to keep our senses in all things. We want to keep busy in spiritual activities, including the ministry, teaching people the *Truth* of Jehovah's word and purposes.
- 30:45 And, what are the rewards for all of this? Well, by repudiating the voice of strangers, spirit anointed ones can look forward to hearing the Fine Shepherd's words found at Luke chapter 12 verse 32 directed to them personally. Luke chapter 12 and verse 32, Jesus says to his anointed followers, "Have no fear, little flock, because your father has approved of giving you the Kingdom." Yes, they have an opportunity to share in ruling in the Kingdom with Christ Jesus. But what about the rest of us, the vast majority of Jehovah's people around the earth today, the other sheep? Well, we can look forward to hearing Jesus words recorded at Matthew chapter 25 and verse 34 spoken to us personally. Matthew 25 and verse 34, "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who have been blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the founding of the world.'"
- 32:00 So friends, regardless of whether we are of the Little Flock, or whether we're of the Other Sheep, as one flock today, we joyfully serve under the loving care and protection of one Shepherd. *And* we will continue to do so into eternity, if we listen to the voice of our Shepherd, and at the *same* time **beware** of the voice of strangers.