

I AM

The "I Am" Statements of Jesus Discussion Guide

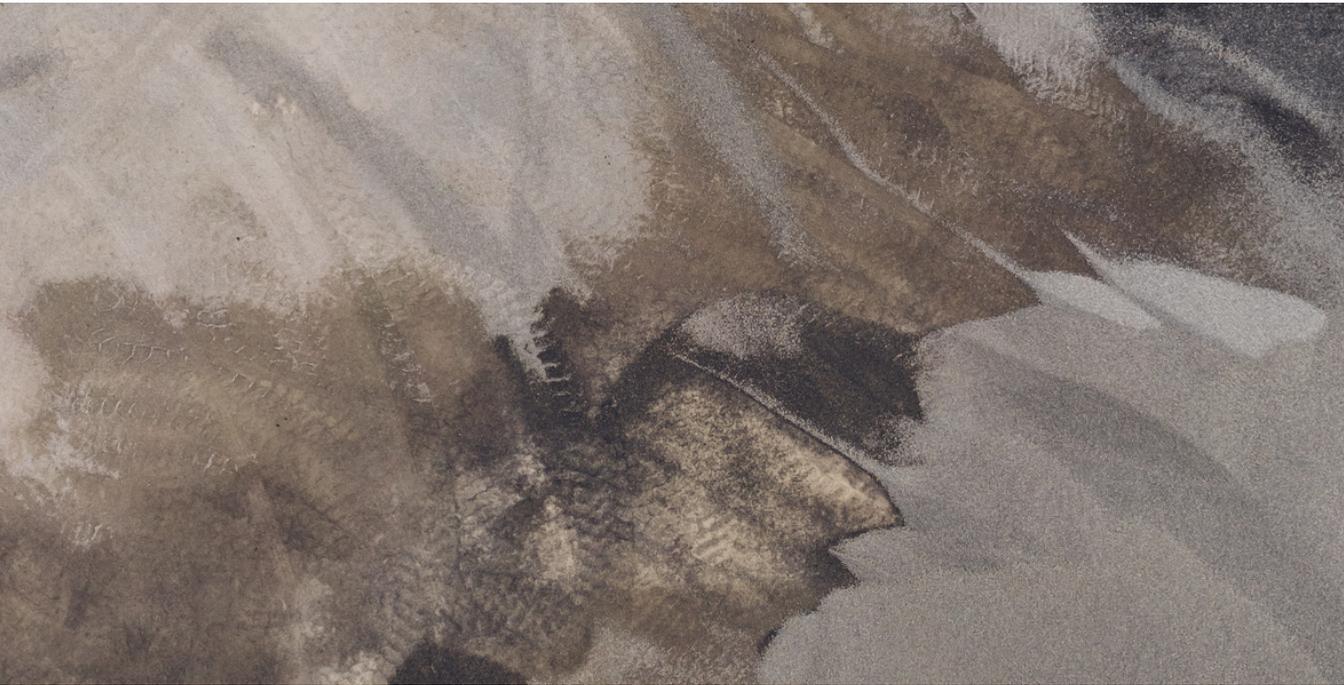




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Jesus is Enough

GUIDE OVERVIEW

Every human wonders, “Am I enough?” And, eventually everyone realizes, “I am not.” This harsh reality leaves us searching for something that will be enough to satisfy the deeper longings we have for things like safety, security, and significance. As we move from object to object, person to person, we’re looking to see if they’ll be enough, or if we’ll be enough for them.

In this study, we’ll see that Jesus is enough to meet all of the needs we have. To the nagging question, “Are you enough?” Jesus answers, “I am.” To the hungry, “I am the bread of life.” To those who walk in darkness, “I am the light of the world.” To those looking for answers, Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”

It’s likely that many people do not realize the ways that Jesus can satisfy and settle the soul. As we study some of the “I am...” statements of Jesus, let’s open ourselves up to realize and receive the work that Jesus wants to do in our lives. And, as we discover good news about Jesus, let’s share what we’re learning with the people around us who may be asking some of the same questions to which Jesus answers, “I am.”

How to use this guide:

GRAB A FRIEND, YOUR COMMUNITY GROUP, OR REFLECT ON
YOUR OWN USING THESE QUESTIONS & PRAYERS.

I Am

BACKGROUND & SUMMARY

Jesus is often portrayed as a happy, go-lucky teacher who made people feel good. But in John 8, two little words almost got Jesus stoned by an angry crowd. Jesus was drawing the lines of identity between Himself and the crowd. First off, He outright told the crowd they were slaves to sin. In fact, He called out all humanity as being slaves. "Everyone who sins is a slave to sin." Sin means doing or thinking something that goes against God and His perfect character. Even more so, 'being sinful' means someone whose whole being is rebellious against God and misses the mark of pleasing Him.

Then, He drops a bomb of thought about His identity. Jesus knew the Jews trusted their family tree to be right with God. They considered that their sin was covered. Jesus offends them with the truth, but He does it in love. Essentially, He says, "Look, I know your background, but by the way you are trying to kill me, you show who your real father is – the Devil." This situation all leads up to one of the most famous statements in Scripture. Jesus says, "I AM."

Jesus, knowing full well that they banked on their historic family tree for right standing with God, claims to be God with these sacred words. He identifies himself as God in front of their face. Keep in mind, they're looking at a 30-something-year-old adult claiming to know God in heaven and to be greater and older than their forefather Abraham. His claim was an offense to their worldview. He claimed to be divine. In that instance, He was declaring to be the eternal God of all creation, both fully human and fully God. So how did they respond? They responded with wanting Him and His message gone.

How would you respond?

Many ideas float around about who Jesus is. The Book of John accounts in detail what Jesus claimed to be and what He did while on earth. I encourage you to wrestle with His "I AM" statements. Wrestle with the real Jesus and how it (He) impacts your view of the world. He confronted the crowds in His day and still does in ours.

*Jesus says, "I AM."
How would you respond?*

I Am

JOHN 8:42-59

42 Jesus told them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, because I have come to you from God. I am not here on my own, but He sent me.

43 Why can't you understand what I am saying? It's because you can't even hear me! 44 For you are the children of your father the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies. 45 So when I tell the truth, you just naturally don't believe me! 46 Which of you can truthfully accuse me of sin? And since I am telling you the truth, why don't you believe me? 47 Anyone who belongs to God listens gladly to the words of God. But you don't listen because you don't belong to God."



48 The people retorted, "You Samaritan devil! Didn't we say all along that you were possessed by a demon?"

49 "No," Jesus said, "I have no demon in me. For I honor my Father - and you dishonor me. 50 And though I have no wish to glorify myself, God is going to glorify me. He is the true judge. 51 I tell you the truth, anyone who obeys my teaching will never die!"

52 The people said, "Now we know you are possessed by a demon. Even Abraham and the prophets died, but you say, 'Anyone who obeys my teaching will never die!' 53 Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?"

54 Jesus answered, "If I want glory for myself, it doesn't count. But it is my Father who will glorify me. You say, 'He is our God,' 55 but you don't even know Him. I know Him. If I said otherwise, I would be as great a liar as you! But I do know Him and obey Him. 56 Your father Abraham rejoiced as he looked forward to my coming. He saw it and was glad."

57 The people said, "You aren't even fifty years old. How can you say you have seen Abraham?"

58 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I AM!" 59 At that point they picked up stones to throw at Him. But Jesus was hidden from them and left the Temple.

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I AM."

I Am

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Jesus declares Himself to be the eternal God of all creation, both fully human and fully God. Think back on when you first heard this. How did you respond? What do you believe? What would you say to someone struggling with this idea?

What was preventing the people from receiving His message and being set free? In other words, what were they placing their faith in, and what was their source of security that gave them the faulty sense that they did not need Jesus to set them free?

Jesus openly confronts the Jewish people about their identity and standing with God, stating that their actions show who their real father is - the Devil. How would you respond to this accusation? How does Jesus' authority and confrontation lead to repentance and bring freedom?

What does it mean to you - "I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I AM!"
Does this truth bring you relief? Freedom? Lead to you a place of humility?

I Am

PRAYER

O God, You have taught me that Christ has all fullness and so all plenitude of the Spirit, that all fullness I lack in myself is in Him, for His people, not for Himself alone, He having perfect knowledge, grace, righteousness, to make me see, to make me righteous, to give me fullness;

that it is my duty, out of a sense of emptiness, to go to Christ, possess, enjoy His fullness as mine, as if I had it in myself, because it is for me in Him;

that when I do this I am full of the Spirit, as a fish that has got from the shore to the sea and has all fullness of waters to move in, for when faith fills me, then I am full;

that this is the way to be filled with the Spirit, like Stephen, first faith, then fullness, for this way makes me most empty, and so most fit for the Spirit to fill.

You have taught me that the finding of this treasure of all grace in the field of Christ brings strength, joy, glory, and renders all graces alive.

Help me to delight more in what I receive from Christ, more in that fullness which is in him, the fountain of all his glory.

Let me not think to receive the Spirit from him as a 'thing' apart from finding, drinking, being filled with him.

To this end, O God, establish me in Christ, settle me, give me a being there, assure me with certainty that all this is mine, for this only will fill my heart with joy and peace.



Bread of Life

BACKGROUND & SUMMARY

If you were starving, to what extreme would you go to eat and have a satisfied stomach? Our stomachs can drive our decisions, our feelings, and our schedules. Jesus understood that we as humans have an impulse to survive and live off of food. The stomach is made for food and food was made for the stomach. It's an essential and powerful picture of our dependence on something for survival. In John chapter 6, Jesus paints a picture of who He is, what we need, and how He was the answer for our needs. **Everyone has two stomachs - both must be fed.**

Jesus sprung a new idea on this crowd. You have two stomachs with two different needs that are similar, but one is more important, even more so than physically eating! If you don't eat food, you die. In the same way, if you don't have food for your spiritual stomach (which Jesus is using here as a metaphor to Himself) then you also will starve and die eternally...

He knew a need they had which they didn't even know they had. Their deeper need was to eat eternal food to give them life forever. He points them to Himself as the eternal Bread that fully satisfies a person's spiritual stomach forever.

Any baby understands picking up food and putting it in their mouth. But how about this eternal food of Jesus? If Jesus says we have to eat eternally to never be hungry or thirsty again – how do you do this? Believe in Him. “Believing is eating.” When it comes to Jesus Christ, believing is internally ‘eating Jesus’ claims of being the Savior who can give you the food to live forever. Only God is eternal. No human can give this gift. Jesus was also implying that if you reject Him as the food of eternal life, you will die. Jesus showed them His identity as the Savior who came to feed our deeper hunger for eternal life.

Jesus showed them His identity as the Savior who came to feed our deeper hunger for eternal life.

Bread of Life

JOHN 6:35-51

35 Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. 36 But you haven't believed in me even though you have seen me. 37 However, those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them. 38 For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do my own will. 39 And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those He has given me, but that I should raise them up at the last day. 40 For it is my Father's will that all who see His Son and believe in Him should have eternal life. I will raise them up at the last day."



41 Then the people began to murmur in disagreement because He had said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." 42 They said, "Isn't this Jesus, the son of Joseph? We know His father and mother. How can He say, 'I came down from heaven?'"

43 But Jesus replied, "Stop complaining about what I said. 44 For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them up. 45 As it is written in the Scriptures, 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from Him comes to me. 46 (Not that anyone has ever seen the Father; only I, who was sent from God, have seen Him.)

47 "I tell you the truth, anyone who believes has eternal life. 48 Yes, I am the bread of life! 49 Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, but they all died. 50 Anyone who eats the bread from heaven, however, will never die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and this bread, which I will offer so the world may live, is my flesh."

Jesus answered, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

Bread of Life

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Have you ever had a longing, a hunger, for something other than what this world could provide - something that was more than temporal? How is an awareness of this hunger a good thing? What should it lead you to?

Jesus contrasts two appetites - one for physical nourishment and one for spiritual sustenance. How is each appetite satisfied? What does Jesus promise to those who come to Him in faith for spiritual nourishment?

Jesus showed them His identity as the Savior who came to feed our deeper hunger for eternal life. Are there other sources of "food" that you are looking to give you eternal life and satisfaction beside Jesus? If so, what are they and do you think they will satisfy you in this life and after? Why do you think you turn to those things, rather than Jesus?

What does it mean to "depend on Jesus for survival"? How have you seen Him sustain you over the past several months?

Bread of Life

PRAYER: PSALM 107:1-9

If praying with others, have one person read the first line of each stanza. Then, as a group, read the second line together.

Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever!
HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER!

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed from trouble
HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER

and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.
HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER!

Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to a city to dwell in;
HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER!

hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them.
HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER!

Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.
HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER!

He led them by a straight way till they reached a city to dwell in.
HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER!

Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for His wondrous works to the children of man!
HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER!

For He satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul He fills with good things.
HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER!



Light of the World

BACKGROUND & SUMMARY

Light displays its brilliance in dark, dilapidated places. By its nature, light has many powerful functions. It reveals things hidden in darkness. Light leads the way out of dark situations. Light brings knowledge of what is in front of us. Light shows you what is truly there. Without the sun, a light bulb, or another source of light, we would be lost and confused.

In a similar way, Jesus knew the spiritual darkness in the world.

Adultery. Deceit. Murder. Sin. Corruption.

He saw it firsthand. And now as the Son of God come to earth, He was right in the middle of all its ugliness. All the ugliness that still exists today.

What was Jesus' response to this darkness?

In John 8, Jesus declares Himself to be the Light of the world that illuminates the way for us to follow - a way out of our darkness and sin. He is the light that shows us how to have a perfect relationship with God.

Sadly, not all those who are in the darkness realize that they need the light. In John 8, there were some Jewish leaders who rejected Jesus. They misunderstood Jesus and His mission. They rejected Him.

Jesus freely offers Himself to us as the Light of the World. Have you accepted Him as the Light?

Jesus declares himself to be the Light of the world that illuminates the way for us to follow - a way out of our darkness and sin.

Light of the World

JOHN 8:12-20

12 Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life."

13 The Pharisees replied, "You are making those claims about yourself! Such testimony is not valid."

14 Jesus told them, "These claims are valid even though I make them about myself. For I know where I came from and where I am going, but you don't know this about me. 15 You judge me by human standards, but I do not judge anyone. 16 And if I did, my judgment would be correct in every respect because I am not alone. The Father who sent me is with me. 17 Your own law says that if two people agree about something, their witness is accepted as fact. 18 I am one witness, and my Father who sent me is the other."

19 "Where is your father?" they asked. Jesus answered, "Since you don't know who I am, you don't know who my Father is. If you knew me, you would also know my Father."

20 Jesus made these statements while he was teaching in the section of the Temple known as the Treasury. But he was not arrested, because his time had not yet come.



Jesus answered, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life."

Light of the World

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Would you describe your life as full of darkness or light?

What does it feel like to walk in darkness? How have you experienced following Jesus as being like following a light through a dark place?

Knowing that Jesus is the 'Light of the World', how can this truth lead you to hope while in difficult circumstances? How can you use this good news to encourage others who may be struggling - what would you say to them?

What makes it so hard for us to come out of darkness and begin walking in the light? As you follow God, ask Him to also shine light on the area(s) of your life that might still be unexposed or not yet dealt with.

Light of the World

PRAYER

O God, the light of every heart that sees Thee,
the Life of every soul that loves Thee,
the strength of every mind that seeks Thee,
grant me ever to continue steadfast in Thy holy love.

Be Thou the joy of my heart;
take it all to Thyself, and therein abide.

The house of my soul is, I confess, too narrow for Thee;
do thou enlarge it, that Thou mayest enter in;
it is ruinous, but do Thou repair it.

It has that within which must offend Thine eyes;
I confess and know it;
but whose help shall I implore in cleansing it, but Thine alone?

To Thee, therefore, I cry urgently,
begging that Thou wilt cleanse me from my secret faults,
and keep Thy servant from presumptuous sins,
that they never get dominion over me.
Amen.

Augustine of Hippo, circa 415 AD



Good Shepherd & The Gate

BACKGROUND & SUMMARY

Jesus describes human beings to be like sheep. A modern-day metaphor for us being like sheep is childhood. As kids, we need a home, guidance, and protection. Children can easily wander off without guidance.

In John 10, Jesus is breaking down the fact that we are like sheep needing to follow His voice and receive the care of an authentic, certified Shepherd to get home. Through this picture, He emphasizes our need to know who to follow and who not to follow.

We all have many voices telling us what to believe and acting as our spiritual guides to God. Jesus draws a line in between Himself and all other teachers. He makes the point that outside of a True Shepherd's care we are in danger. What danger? Simply put, a life lived outside of God's guidance can equal a deceived life here on earth and one that won't lead to an everlasting life with God after death. This picture may seem weird to us in our modern-day context, but don't worry, even the crowds around Jesus were confused.

Thankfully Jesus doesn't stop His illustration. He continues in John 10 to speak specifically about Himself being the Gate to eternal safety with God. There is no other way to enter into God's care without knowing and trusting in Jesus. So, who are the thieves and robbers He speaks about? The thieves are anyone else who came before or after Jesus claiming that they were the Middle Man or the "Gate" between God and man. The thieves could be other religions, false saviors, or a "let me get mine" culture deceiving you into not believing in Jesus as the only Gate to enter into God's family. **So how do we go through this Gate, Jesus?** Learn who He is, what He did on earth for you, and why He did it. Then, trust Him for His claim – He is the Gate to know God.

Visualize getting home, walking through the gate, and being safe from harm under the care of a Good Shepherd and Father. This is a picture of Paradise. Jesus is gathering up His kids like sheep from all streets, neighborhoods, and backgrounds.

Would you entertain a conversation with Jesus if He was talking right in front of you? When He was here on this earth, He spoke to sick beggars, prideful pastors, grieving sisters, prostitutes, misfit disciples – all with personal stories, baggage, and backgrounds. All of these characters are relatable to you and me in some way. That's why when Jesus talks about being a Good Shepherd in John 10, I feel like He is talking directly to me.

Two points stand out. First, Jesus states, there is no Shepherd like Him who would sacrifice His own life for the people He cares for. He proved His devotion to us by dying on a cross on our behalf. He is not like a hired worker who only protects the sheep for money. That goes beyond solely having a job. That is proof of His love.

Do you see similarities between yourself and a sheep needing a Shepherd?

No other religion expresses a personal Savior God coming to take care of humanity in documented history. Again, this claim is not just for the characters in the story but for us. Jesus states, "I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd."

Secondly, Jesus proves He has the power to accomplish the job He has. He has the power to die for us and take His life back up again to defeat our spiritual enemies of sin and the Devil. Because of His love, He gave up His life and was then raised from a grave to overcome sin and death. Jesus documented this fact in human history as recorded in the Bible so we would know Him and come under His care for our life now and after we die.

Jesus calls us to come to Him. You know Jesus' voice by hearing His message about himself in His Word and by deciding whether you accept Him as a Good Shepherd or not. You can run to Him. He desires to be your Good Shepherd and care for your soul.

Good Shepherd & The Gate

JOHN 10:1-17

"I tell you the truth, anyone who sneaks over the wall of a sheepfold, rather than going through the gate, must surely be a thief and a robber! 2 But the one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice. 5 They won't follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don't know his voice."

6 Those who heard Jesus use this illustration didn't understand what He meant, 7 so He explained it to them: "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep.



8 All who came before me were thieves and robbers. But the true sheep did not listen to them. 9 Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures. 10 The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep. 12 A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming. He will abandon the sheep because they don't belong to him and he isn't their shepherd. And so the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock. 13 The hired hand runs away because he's working only for the money and doesn't really care about the sheep.

14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, 15 just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd.

17 "The Father loves me because I sacrifice my life so I may take it back again. 18 No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded."

*"I am the good shepherd.
The good shepherd
sacrifices His life for the
sheep."*

Good Shepherd & The Gate

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Jesus describes humans to be like sheep - wandering, in need of someone to care for them. In what ways do you see similarities between yourself and a sheep needing a Shepherd?

Several times Jesus says the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. How does Jesus' sacrifice of himself make you feel about yourself?

The only way to the Father is through Jesus, the gate. Meaning, there's no striving or doing enough good to make you right with God - this is Good News! What does this mean to you?

What does Jesus mean when He calls Himself the 'Good Shepherd'? What ways have you experienced Jesus to be so in your life? What stands out about His protection or provision in your life? How can you encourage others see Him as that?

Good Shepherd & The Gate

PRAYER

My Father, I could never have sought my happiness in thy love, unless thou had'st first loved me.

Thy Spirit has encouraged me by grace to seek thee, has made known to me thy reconciliation in Jesus, has taught me to believe it, has helped me to take thee for my God and portion.

May He grant me to grow in the knowledge and experience of thy love, and walk in it all the way to glory.

Blessed forever be thy fatherly affection, which chose me to be one of thy children by faith in Jesus: I thank thee for giving me the desire to live as such.

In Jesus, my brother, I have my new birth, every restraining power, every renewing grace. It is by thy Spirit I call thee Father, believe in thee, love thee;

Strengthen me inwardly for every purpose of my Christian life; Let the Spirit continually reveal to me my interest in Christ, and open to me the riches of thy love in Him;

May He abide in me that I may know my union with Jesus, and enter into constant fellowship with Him;

By thy Spirit may I daily live to thee, rejoice in thy love, find it the same to me as to thy Son, and become rooted and grounded in it as a house on rock;

I know but little - increase my knowledge of thy love in Jesus, keep me pressing forward for clearer discoveries of it, so that I may find its eternal fullness;

Magnify thy love to me according to its greatness, and not according to my deserts or prayers, and whatever increase thou givest, let it draw out greater love to thee.



Resurrection & The Life

BACKGROUND & SUMMARY

I sat staring at a broken man's body in a hospital room, corrupted by years of alcoholism and a simple thought repeated in my mind; "It's one thing to argue about whether or not Jesus' death and resurrection are real when you are in a coffee shop. It's another thing when you are looking death in its face and don't have an answer." Death demands an answer. No one can argue its power over our lives.

When on earth, Jesus confronted death's ugly face on various occasions. While He did still weep and lament over death's toll on His dear friend Lazarus, He did not end His response to death with just empathy and mourning. He answered death's demand with a scandalous, convincing claim.

In John Chapter 11, did you notice what Jesus spoke about Himself? He claimed that He had power over death itself. He allowed the sad situation with Lazarus to bring God in heaven praise through His miraculous actions to help people believe that Jesus was not just a good friend, not just a man, but God himself. Who else could raise a dead corpse to life?

Don't miss what He states after the "I AM the Resurrection and the Life" claim. He commands us to believe in Him, and we can have the same hope when facing death. He displayed this power through His recently deceased friend Lazarus. Soon Jesus was going to be killed on a cross, and this event with Lazarus foreshadowed that He would also raise Himself up from a grave. He is the answer to death's demand.

What is your answer to death's demand?

How will you argue with death when it, in whatever form, comes knocking on your temporary body and demands an answer? Jesus had compassion on His friends in their difficult trail. He has the same love for you and me. He compassionately took our eternal death on the cross and answered death's demand over us for eternity. He wants you to know a life-giving relationship with Him as your Savior and friend. He wants you to have hope in a world full of death that He will also raise anyone who believes in Him when you or this world passes away. For the follower of Jesus Christ, we are given a solid answer through Jesus for death's demands.

What is your answer to death's demand? We are given a solid answer through Jesus.

Resurrection & The Life

JOHN 11:23-44

23 Jesus told her, "Your brother will rise again."

24 "Yes," Martha said, "he will rise when everyone else rises, at the last day."

25 Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. 26 Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this, Martha?"

27 "Yes, Lord," she told him. "I have always believed you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who has come into the world from God." 28 Then she returned to Mary. She called Mary aside from the mourners and told her, "The Teacher is here and wants to see you." 29 So Mary immediately went to Him.



30 Jesus had stayed outside the village, at the place where Martha met him. 31 When the people who were at the house consoling Mary saw her leave so hastily, they assumed she was going to Lazarus's grave to weep. So they followed her there. 32 When Mary arrived and saw Jesus, she fell at His feet and said, "Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died."

33 When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, a deep anger welled up within Him, and He was deeply troubled. 34 "Where have you put him?" He asked them. They told Him, "Lord, come and see." 35 Then Jesus wept. 36 The people who were standing nearby said, "See how much He loved him!" 37 But some said, "This man healed a blind man. Couldn't He have kept Lazarus from dying?"

38 Jesus was still angry as He arrived at the tomb, a cave with a stone rolled across its entrance. 39 "Roll the stone aside," Jesus told them. But Martha, the dead man's sister, protested, "Lord, he has been dead for four days. The smell will be terrible."

40 Jesus responded, "Didn't I tell you that you would see God's glory if you believe?" 41 So they rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, thank you for hearing me. 42 You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so that they will believe you sent me." 43 Then Jesus shouted, "Lazarus, come out!" 44 And the dead man came out, his hands and feet bound in graveclothes, his face wrapped in a headcloth. Jesus told them, "Unwrap him and let him go!"

Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life."

Resurrection & The Life

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Death demands an answer. What is Jesus' answer to this demand? What is your answer?

If you had to face death today, how would you respond?

Is our hope only for the future (living with God after we die)? How would you describe the hope we have here-and-now through the promise of life through Jesus?

How does the promise of eternal life with Jesus affect the way we live or make decisions this week? Would we take more or less risks? Would we be more or less generous and forgiving? What else would be different, if we truly believed that Jesus was the resurrection and life?

Resurrection & The Life

PRAYER

Almighty and most merciful Father,
we have erred and strayed from your ways like lost sheep,
we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts,
we have offended against your holy laws,
we have left undone those things which we should have done,
and we have done those things which we should not to have done.

But you, O Lord, have mercy upon us,
spare those who confess their faults, restore those who are penitent,
according to your promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord;
and grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake,
that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy Name.
Amen.

(A time of silent reflection on the ways we have strayed from God, followed by the closing line.)

The Almighty and merciful Lord grant you absolution and remission of all your sins,
true repentance, amendment of life, and the grace and consolation of his Holy Spirit.
Amen.



The Way, The Truth, & The Life

BACKGROUND & SUMMARY

We typically like to think we're not influenced by the messages of other people. In reality, we are deeply affected by what we take in. It could be videos on YouTube, a friend's opinion or a song we play on repeat. The question is, are all messages good for us? Are all messages true? Specifically, in regards to the topics of God and how to live life, who has the right answers? Let's get Jesus' take on this idea from John Chapter 14.

Before Jesus called him, Peter was a guy who fished for a living. His life had changed dramatically after that call. Now after leaving everything, Jesus was talking to Him about going back to heaven and leaving the disciples. Anxiety filled his heart. The disciples of Jesus were all young men. Although they grew up in a different time, they were swimming in messages and propaganda just like us today. Which way was right? I can imagine questions like, "Jesus, why are you leaving us here alone in this confusing and crazy world?" Or "I thought I was supposed to follow YOU?! Now you're leaving us? They must have felt abandoned. I would have responded just like Thomas. "Lord, what are you talking about? I don't know how to get to heaven!"

Jesus shows real care and guidance for his disciples though. He knows our hearts can get incredibly confused. He first reassures them. "Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me." Secondly, he gives them hope of His return; "When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am." And thirdly, he gives them God given instructions based on His Divine identity. "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."

Jesus answers the deepest questions humankind has explored for all of history. Is there a God? Who is He? How can we know Him and live forever? Like a troubled young man or woman in a dark room hearing a million different voices and not knowing who or what to follow; Jesus boldly claims that He is the only true way to know and be with God. Trust in Him and don't go on living with a confused and troubled heart.

Jesus answers the deepest questions humankind has explored for all of history - Is there a God?

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JOHN 14:1-14

1 "Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. 2 There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? 3 When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. 4 And you know the way to where I am going."

5 "No, we don't know, Lord," Thomas said. "We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

6 Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.

7 If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. From now on, you do know Him and have seen Him!" 8 Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."

9 Jesus replied, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don't know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking me to show Him to you? 10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak are not my own, but my Father who lives in me does His work through me. 11 Just believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or at least believe because of the work you have seen me do.

12 "I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. 13 You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. 14 Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!



Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Think about times of stress or sorrow in your life, and then consider what the disciples were feeling. What is it like to have a "troubled" heart?

Do you believe Jesus is the way, truth and life? Some people are looking for what way to go in life. What does it mean to say that Jesus is the way? How can we offer hope to people who are looking for the way?

Some people are looking to find the truth. Jesus says that He is the truth. Notice that He isn't just telling us the truth, but that He himself IS the truth. How often are we searching for answers, hoping to find the truth, but discover that the longing we have for truth is more relational than informational. In what way might Jesus be the truth we are looking for?

All of us are searching for life - for the meaning of life, or for a full and adventurous life. What matters most to you in life, or what do you hope most to get out of life? How does Jesus shape our expectations when he says that He is the life? In what ways does Jesus satisfy the longing to find meaning or significance in life? Can Jesus provide a full and satisfying life to those who follow Him?

The Way, The Truth, & The Life

PRAYER

Life-giving God, Quicken me to call upon thy name, for my mind is ignorant, my thoughts vagrant, my affections earthly, my heart unbelieving, and only thy Spirit can help my infirmities.

I approach you as my Father and Friend, my portion forever, my exceeding joy, my strength of heart.

I believe in you as the God of nature, the ordainer of providence, the sender of Jesus my Savior.

My guilty fears discourage an approach to you, but I praise you for the blessed news that Jesus reconciles you to me.

May the truth that is in Him illuminate in me all that is dark, establish in me all that is wavering, comfort in me all that is wretched, accomplish in me all that is of thy goodness, and glorify in me the name of Jesus.

I pass through a vale of tears but bless you for the opening gate of glory at its end.

Enable me to realize as mine the better, heavenly country. Prepare me for every part of my pilgrimage.

Uphold my steps by thy Word. Let no iniquity dominate me.

Teach me that Christ cannot be the way if I am the end, that he cannot be Redeemer if I am my own savior, that there can be no true union with him while sin has my heart.

May I by faith accept him as Redeemer and Lord or not at all.



The Vine

BACKGROUND & SUMMARY

It's easy for me to forget the process that takes place to produce what I love and eat so quickly - fruit. We all know that fruit isn't produced out of thin air, but we love it without question. If we take away elements like soil, water, sun, and a gardener's touch, we don't experience the beautiful results. In John 15, Jesus breaks down how people and God are like these agricultural elements in the Garden of life.

From the get-go in verse 1, Jesus makes a strong claim about His identity. Jesus is the sprawling grapevine producing fruit, and God in Heaven is the Gardener overseeing the Garden of Humanity. The Gardener gives care and direction, cutting off bad parts (called pruning) from the vine and nurturing the good parts to bring out the best quality fruit from its branches. "To prune" means to cut off parts of a plant that suck away the nutrition the plant needs to produce fruit or vegetables. Once the bad parts are cut off, more nutrition can flow in to help the good branches be more fruitful.

Jesus says His Gospel message gives life, prunes, and purifies us so we don't live like dead branches. Jesus stresses the word "abide or remain" to His disciples and us. But what does that mean? Think of it this way; God sent Jesus to the world as His instrument to connect dead branches to the life-giving Gardener. The opposite is true as well. If a branch - you or me - is not connected to Jesus by a trust in Him, we are dead with no life in us. We may look like a branch on the outside and breathe like a living human, but in our spirit, we are dead.

Jesus is the Vine - offering new life to dead branches.

What comes from being in Jesus is a fruitful life here on earth, too. Most people don't want to waste their life. We want it to count for this life and beyond. In the same way, every Gardener wants to have a garden that produces good fruit. Jesus connects the two concepts here for us. If you want your life to be fruitful and please God, it can only happen through connecting yourself in faith to the life of Jesus, the True Vine.

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The Vine

JOHN 15:1-17

"I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and He prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. 3 You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you.

4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

5 "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.



6 Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. 7 But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! 8 When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.

9 "I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. 10 When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in His love. 11 I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! 12 This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. 13 There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. 16 You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. 17 This is my command: Love each other.

"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit."

The Vine

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Are you connected to the True Vine? Is your life bearing fruit? What might that fruit look like in the life of someone who is abiding in Jesus?

Jesus repeatedly calls His disciples to "remain" or "abide" in Him. What does that mean? What are the consequences of not remaining in Him?

What are the alternate things or people that we abide in? What consumes your minds and ambitions? What affects your mood more than anything else? Is there anything that has power over you to the degree that it makes you elated when you have it and it makes you angry or depressed when you don't have it?

How can Jesus be a source of abiding for you - how can you turn from abiding elsewhere to abiding in Jesus? What would that look like, and are there any bible verses that might remind you to abide in Jesus?

The Vine

PRAYER

Almighty and eternal God, Merciful Father,
who has given to the human race
thy beloved Son as an example of humility, obedience, and patience,
to precede us on the way of life, bearing the cross;

Graciously grant us that we, inflamed by His infinite love,
may take up the sweet yoke of His Gospel together
with the mortification of the cross,
following Him as His true disciples,
so that we shall one day gloriously rise with Him and joyfully hear the final sentence:
"Come, ye blessed of My Father, and possess the kingdom
which was prepared for you from the beginning,"
where Thou reignest with the Son and the Holy Ghost,
and where we hope to reign with Thee,
world without end.
Amen.

Francis of Assisi, circa 1209



Alpha & Omega

BACKGROUND & SUMMARY

There are many times during which we feel as though the world is out of control. Wars, diseases, and natural disasters seem to happen much too frequently. At times, we all experience pain, suffering, and fear. There are days when we all wonder, “Where is God?” or, “What is God doing?”

The apostle John wrote the book of Revelation to assure Christians that God has a plan for all of time and history. Even though the forces of evil may periodically seem to rise, they will ultimately be defeated.

King Jesus defeated sin and death through His life, death, and resurrection. One day He will return to set everything right and reverse the curse of sin on all of the universe.

The Bible tells us that Jesus is God. He never had a beginning. He created everything in the universe to be “very good.” Revelation 1 calls Him the “Alpha” (or the beginning, the first letter in the Greek alphabet).

The Bible also tells us that Jesus will live forever. Even though He died on the cross, He rose again with invincible, eternal life. He offers the gift of eternal life to all who believe in Him and accept the gospel.

Jesus will return to judge the world and bring an end to human history. Revelation 1 calls Him the “Omega” (or the end, the last letter in the Greek alphabet).

Once human history is over, Jesus will rule forever with His people. All sin, death, and sorrow will be no more. Jesus, the Alpha and the Omega, will receive praise and glory from His people forever. This is good news!

The Bible tells us that Jesus is God. He never had a beginning and will live forever.

Alpha & Omega

REVELATION 1:4-8

4 This letter is from John to the seven churches in the province of Asia.

Grace and peace to you from the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come; from the sevenfold Spirit before His throne; 5 and from Jesus Christ. He is the faithful witness to these things, the first to rise from the dead, and the ruler of all the kings of the world.

All glory to him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by shedding His blood for us. 6 He has made us a Kingdom of priests for God His Father. All glory and power to Him forever and ever! Amen.

7 Look! He comes with the clouds of heaven.

And everyone will see Him—
even those who pierced Him.

And all the nations of the world
will mourn for Him.

Yes! Amen!

8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega - the beginning and the end," says the Lord God. "I am the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come - the Almighty One."



"I am the Alpha and the Omega - the beginning and the end," says the Lord God.

Alpha & Omega

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How does Jesus' claim to be the sovereign Lord over history - hand over your life - help you face the successes and tragedies of your daily experience?

Does it help to know that Jesus is in control of everything - from start to finish - the beginning to the end? How would you explain this to someone?

How does the fact that Jesus will return to set everything right give you hope and confidence now? How can you share that hope with someone else this week?

Alpha & Omega

PRAYER

Apostles Creed *(The early church's declaration of faith - in this case we say it as a prayer.)*

I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth;
and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.
He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.
Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.
Amen.





ANCHOR
— CHURCH —

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