

# introduction

**The stories found in the Gospel accounts make a kaleidoscope of claims about Jesus.** Whether listening to a parable or a dialog between Jesus and others, the hearer is given a new perspective for understanding who He is. But in the most profound cases, Jesus asserts things about Himself.

In John 8, there is an extended conversation between Jesus and His Jewish critics. You can feel the tension rising like a tide, and at its culmination, Jesus made a simple statement: “Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” Why did people pick up rocks to stone Him? Pick up your Old Testament, shuffle to the beginning pages of Exodus, and hear the words from the burning bush. Yahweh, the personal God of the Israelites, the God who brought them out of Egypt with a strong hand and outstretched arm, He was the only “I am.” Though the cosmic blasphemy of Jesus’ words would bring His death, they simultaneously give us life.

At the heart of this series is the idea that Jesus made concrete, undeniable claims about His own identity. The hearer of these claims is forced to reckon with them. And like the first century audience grappling with Jesus’ words, we also are forced to reckon with them and with Him. If He is who He says He is, we must consider what these claims mean to us.

So, from these accounts we can say, Jesus Christ is Beautiful. He is Savior. He is Redeemer. He is God. But, in light of who He is, we can begin to answer who we are to be.

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# using this study guide

The curriculum is designed for group learning, interaction,  
and practical steps to living faithfully.

## THIS GUIDE IS SEPARATED INTO THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS:

### OPEN

These are simple ice-breaker questions. They are to engage your group into the conversation about the current “I am” statement from the Book of John.

### THE TEXT

All the questions for the session are about this text. To get the most out of the study, it is best to read the session’s text before your meeting and when you come together. Take turns if necessary, but make sure to read the text aloud.

### READ ALOUD

This is related text that can shed light on the session’s text. Take time to read it before your session and read it together.

### OPENING PARAGRAPH

The opening thought is to be read aloud as well. It will give you a starting point before going into the questions for the study.

### REFLECT

This section includes a series of questions designed to help you think through the text, how it may relate to other similar texts in the Bible, and provides a bridge to think about how these truths should impact us now.

### SO I AM . . .

Applying what we learn is often difficult, but critical. **Don’t skip this opportunity.** Read this section together at the end of your study and take action. Throughout your week, consider what you have learned and what is being asked. Pray about the week’s study. Every day presents choices. Ask God to help you be obedient and seek His desires for you and those around you. Don’t forget to use other group members to keep you accountable.



# bread

SESSION ONE

**JESUS SAID  
TO THEM, "I AM  
THE BREAD OF  
LIFE; WHOEVER  
COMES TO ME  
SHALL NOT  
HUNGER,  
AND WHOEVER  
BELIEVES IN ME  
SHALL NEVER  
THIRST...**



<sup>25</sup> When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” <sup>26</sup> Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. <sup>27</sup> Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.” <sup>28</sup> Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” <sup>30</sup> So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? <sup>31</sup> Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’ ” <sup>32</sup> Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who

gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” <sup>34</sup> They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”

<sup>35</sup> Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

<sup>36</sup> But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.

<sup>37</sup> All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. <sup>38</sup> For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. <sup>39</sup> And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. <sup>40</sup> For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

## Open

- 1 Who is the most difficult in your family to communicate with?
- 2 Describe a time when someone jumped to a wrong conclusion about you.
- 3 What type of bread are you and why: Fresh Baked? Moldy Wonder? Crusty Pumpernickel? French Toast?

### **JESUS HAD MIRACULOUSLY FED THE FIVE THOUSAND THE DAY BEFORE.**

Now the crowd is anxious to keep access to this source of food. They search for Jesus and find Him on the other side of the lake. “Rabbi, when did you come here?” opens the conversation and John records the zig-zag dialog as Jesus increasingly confronts the crowd about the satisfaction of the moment versus food that endures and brings eternal life. In the “I am the bread of life” declaration, Jesus clearly states His divinity and that He is the source of life. This leaves the crowd and us with the question, “What should we be working to obtain?”



## Reflect

- 4 How would you characterize the back and forth dialog between Jesus and the crowd in verses 25 through 34? Who are the people in the crowd? What is the crowd not understanding?
- 5 In verses 30 and 31, the crowd asks for a sign and refers to the story of manna in the wilderness. Jesus had just fed this crowd the day before. What kind of sign did the crowd want?
- 6 What misunderstanding did Jesus correct in verses 32 and 33? What was Jesus communicating by saying, "...my Father gives you the true bread from heaven"?
- 7 Read Deuteronomy 8:2-3 where Moses was reminding the Israelites to not forget what they learned in their desert experience. What was the intended effect of God's actions?

- 8 In Matthew 4:4, Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 8:3 when tempted by Satan in the wilderness. How does Jesus' response model how we should respond to our needs?
- 9 The crowd is slowly beginning to understand the distinction that Jesus is making between bread and spiritual sustenance. Describe how the manna and bread points to our real need?
- 10 What is Jesus conveying about our life by his statement, "I am the bread of life"? What human need is at the heart of this statement?
- 11 What have you learned about who Jesus is for you?





## So, I am . . .

Due to centuries of history, teachings, and church attendance in our backgrounds, we do not have a difficult time believing that Jesus is God. But consider the people of Jesus' day. They were struggling to comprehend God appearing as a person. They became increasingly disturbed by Jesus' teaching as He described who He was and our dependence on Him. Jesus, God incarnate, was standing in front of them saying "you must want me more than anything else in this world." The bread metaphor confronts us today with the same questions. Is Jesus who He said He is? Is Jesus the bread of my life? Do I draw my spiritual nourishment from Him? Is knowing Jesus my passion? Am I hungering and thirsting to know Jesus more?

**Spend some time reflecting on Jesus' statement, "I am the bread of life." Write down how this metaphor brings deeper meaning to your relationship with Jesus. For example, how does taking Jesus into your life restore, nourish and make you whole? Does Jesus' statement give you more insight into the celebration of communion? How should you respond to His grace? You might respond with the words of a psalm such as Psalm 63:1-3 or the words of a hymn such as, "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus." Share your notes with your group.**

# light

SESSION TWO

**AGAIN JESUS  
SPOKE TO  
THEM, SAYING,  
“I AM THE LIGHT  
OF THE WORLD.  
WHOEVER  
FOLLOWS ME  
WILL NOT WALK  
IN DARKNESS, BUT  
WILL HAVE THE  
LIGHT OF LIFE.”**



<sup>12</sup> Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

<sup>13</sup> So the Pharisees said to him, “You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true.” <sup>14</sup> Jesus answered, “Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. <sup>15</sup> You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. <sup>16</sup> Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. <sup>17</sup> In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. <sup>18</sup> I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me.” <sup>19</sup> They said to him therefore, “Where is your Father?” Jesus answered, “You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know

my Father also.” <sup>20</sup> These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

#### JOHN 8:12-20

<sup>1</sup> As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup> And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. <sup>4</sup> We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. <sup>5</sup> As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” <sup>6</sup> Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man’s eyes with the mud <sup>7</sup> and said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

#### JOHN 9:1-7



## Open

- 1 Considering last week, how could “I am the bread of life” be re-stated in different world cultures like China, Mexico or Germany. I am the \_\_\_\_\_ of life. What word might capture all of them?
- 2 Describe a time when you were in absolute darkness. What feelings and sensations do you remember? Did you get used to it?
- 3 Search the internet for Archimedes. How did he use light?

### THE SECOND “I AM” STATEMENT IS MADE DURING THE FEAST OF BOOTHES, OR

**TABERNACLES.** This was one of Israel’s primary Feasts prescribed by the Torah. Israelites would pilgrimage to Jerusalem, build tents to commemorate the wilderness wandering, and celebrate the ingathering of harvest. One important feature of the Feast was ritual torch lighting. Even outside of the ritual, think of the thousands of people filling every corner of the city with night falling. Booths everywhere. We have lights in every room, hallway, and closet, but take a minute to imagine. As night falls, the darkness is slowly pushed away as the pilgrims, one-by-one, light their candles and torches. Jerusalem would be ablaze. So, when Jesus announces “I am the light of the world” consider how the hearers celebrating this holy occasion would experience His words.



## Reflect

- 4 Read John 1:4. When someone uses “light” as a metaphor today, what is it typically used for? Is it positive, negative, or neutral?
- 5 What do you think Jesus was claiming when He said, “I am the light of the world”? What are your clues from the text?
- 6 In the Gospel of John, Jesus uses this “I am” phrase twice (John 8:12 and John 9:5). What happens in between the statements? What do you think John is trying to communicate through this event?
- 7 Share a time in your life that was metaphorically “dark.” What, if anything, brought light into the situation?
- 8 How did people respond to Jesus’ words? Why do you think they reacted this way?

- 9 Considering the second passage in John 9, how did people react to Jesus' miraculous actions? What do you think is at the heart of their response?
  
- 10 What are we to understand about Jesus' statement in John 8:19 which says, "if you knew me, you would know my Father also"?
  
- 11 Read John 8:12 and 8:23-24. Jesus uses the words "believe" and "follow." How do you think these words relate to each other?
  
- 12 Is Jesus still the "light of the world"? If so, how does this fact impact your life today? What should you do when you find yourself (or those you know) in dark times?

## So, I am . . .

We are to understand that all things were made through Jesus, and without Him, “not was anything made, that was made.” Life that is full of light is only found in Him, by Him and through Him. Peter tells the crowd gathered in Jerusalem after Jesus’ death and resurrection, “You killed the Author of life, but God raised Him from the dead.” (Acts 3:15). To know Jesus is to know truth and to abide in His Word which is what truly makes us His disciples. Knowing the truth sets us free from death, sin and darkness.

**Is there a part of your life that you are reserving for darkness? You know. That thing you do that is outside of what God wants for you, but you try to insulate it from God and everyone else? How can you “walk in the light as He is in the light” this week? One thing is true; we cannot do it alone.**



# good shepherd

SESSION THREE

**I CAME THAT  
THEY MAY HAVE  
LIFE AND HAVE  
IT ABUNDANTLY.  
I AM THE GOOD  
SHEPHERD. THE  
GOOD SHEPHERD  
LAYS DOWN HIS  
LIFE FOR THE  
SHEEP.**

<sup>1</sup>“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.

<sup>2</sup> But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup> To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

<sup>4</sup> When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. <sup>5</sup> A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.”

<sup>6</sup> This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. <sup>7</sup> So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. <sup>8</sup> All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. <sup>9</sup> I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

<sup>10</sup> The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. <sup>11</sup> I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the

sheep. <sup>12</sup> He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. <sup>13</sup> He flees because he is a

hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. <sup>14</sup> I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me,

<sup>15</sup> just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup> And I have other sheep that are not of this fold.

I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. <sup>17</sup> For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. <sup>18</sup> No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.

I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.” <sup>19</sup> There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. <sup>20</sup> Many of them said, “He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?”

<sup>21</sup> Others said, “These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

## Open

- 1 Have you ever watched sheep? How do they seem to operate? Do you think they are easy to manage? Why/why not?
- 2 If you were a shepherd, what would you think the purpose of your job would be?
- 3 What if someone called you a “door”? What might it mean?

### **IMAGINE SOMEONE SAYING TO YOU “YOU’RE MAKING A MOUNTAIN OUT OF A MOLEHILL,**

in fact, it feels like you’re waving like a flag on top of Everest.” What is referenced is literally neither a mountain, nor a molehill and you aren’t a flag, but the extended metaphor is not difficult to decipher. Metaphors in the Bible can be similar. This is exemplified by John in chapter 10 by pancaking two “I am” statements into the same context. Which is He? A door? A Good Shepherd? If you add a barn on your property near your house, the two structures have different purposes, but collectively they can become something bigger with greater meaning—a farm. Look closely at the context of each “I am” metaphor here, and you will see one expanding the other and John’s deep desire for us to know the multifaceted majesty of this King.



## Reflect

- 4 Does it offend you when someone seems like they are trying to lead you? What makes someone “unfollowable” in your book?
- 5 The Old Testament depicts the God of the Israelites using several images such as that used in Psalm 23. Without looking it up, what is the first verse of Psalm 23. What is the tone of the verse?
- 6 Read Isaiah 40:9-11. Who is the writer speaking to (look for the parallel in v.9)? Come up with several adjectives you would use for God as described in this Isaiah passage. How does it compare or differ from the description in John 10?
- 7 In Numbers 27:15-17, knowing that he will not be accompanying Israel into the Promised Land, what does Moses request of God? How does God respond?



- 8 Read Matthew 18:12-14. What is the expectation of the shepherd in this parable? Does it seem reasonable? Why/why not?
- 9 John 10:11 describes the “Good Shepherd’s” purpose. Was this purpose in your list from the second question in the OPEN section (at the start of this session)? Why/why not?
- 10 What do you think John is communicating by the two separate images of Jesus as a “door” and “shepherd”?
- 11 Have you ever paid someone to do a job or watched a paid employee of an organization you worked for bail out when it got too difficult or not worth it? Explain. Would you have done the same? Why/why not?
- 12 In what way do you NOT trust that Jesus is a “Good” shepherd? How about God the Father?



## So, I am . . .

Have you ever considered how many idioms use “sheep”? A wolf in sheep’s clothing. Black sheep. Count sheep. Like sheep. This last one is telling and not very positive. When you are “like sheep” you are just another follower. No critical thought. No decisive nature. A shepherd might suggest that sheep are actually worse than that. Sheep get themselves into trouble. They get stuck in brambles. They climb up hills that they can’t get back down. Could this be the image John and much of the Bible uses for us?! YES! This highlights our need for saving. Our stubborn search for pleasure and self-sufficiency takes us into dark and dangerous places, places God doesn’t want us to go. But, no matter how deep and wide the danger, His love and determination to reconcile us back to Himself is deeper and wider. The Good Shepherd knows His own and brings many to Himself. How are you failing to trust Him?

**What parts of your life are still off limits? Today’s message is for you. Take some time this week to write down a few paragraphs of the ways you want to trust Him more, and where you have been holding back. Don’t skip this one, and be totally honest. Maybe if you’re really bold, you will share it with someone in your group.**

# the resurrection & the life

## SESSION FOUR

<sup>1</sup> Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup> It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. <sup>3</sup> So the sisters sent to him, saying, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” <sup>4</sup> But when Jesus heard it he said, “This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” <sup>5</sup> Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup> So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. <sup>7</sup> Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” <sup>8</sup> The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?” <sup>9</sup> Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. <sup>10</sup> But if anyone walks in the night,

he stumbles, because the light is not in him.” <sup>11</sup> After saying these things, he said to them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.” <sup>12</sup> The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.” <sup>13</sup> Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. <sup>14</sup> Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus has died, <sup>15</sup> and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” <sup>16</sup> So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.” <sup>17</sup> Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. <sup>18</sup> Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, <sup>19</sup> and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning

their brother.<sup>20</sup> So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house.<sup>21</sup> Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.<sup>22</sup> But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.”<sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”<sup>24</sup> Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,<sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”<sup>27</sup> She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”<sup>28</sup> When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.”<sup>29</sup> And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him.<sup>30</sup> Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him.<sup>31</sup> When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there.<sup>32</sup> Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”<sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who

had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.<sup>34</sup> And he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.”<sup>35</sup> Jesus wept.<sup>36</sup> So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”<sup>37</sup> But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?”<sup>38</sup> Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it.<sup>39</sup> Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.”<sup>40</sup> Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?”<sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me.<sup>42</sup> I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.”<sup>43</sup> When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.”<sup>44</sup> The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”<sup>45</sup> Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him,<sup>46</sup> but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

**JOHN 11:1-46**

## Open

- 1 Think of a time (perhaps the first time), when you believed that Jesus was the Son of God. What was it that brought about this moment of clarity?
- 2 Can you recall a time when you prayed for something very specific and did not receive the answer that you expected? What happened? In the end, do you still wish that you had received what you asked for?

**THIS SERIES IS FOCUSED ON THE SEVEN “I AM” STATEMENTS THAT JESUS MAKES IN JOHN’S GOSPEL**, but did you know that there is a second significant seven in this book? John also structures his book around seven miracles, or “signs,” each of which powerfully demonstrates the person and purpose of Jesus. Today’s narrative, the raising of Lazarus, is the climactic seventh sign. As Jesus approaches Jerusalem and all its dangers (see verse 8), He performs this final demonstration of His power and purpose.



The background of the page is a solid orange color. On the left side, there are stylized illustrations of plants. At the top left, there is a cluster of small, dark red flowers. Below that, a long, thin, light green stem with several small, dark green leaves extends vertically. At the bottom left, there is another cluster of small, dark red flowers. On the right side, there are some faint, light green plant-like shapes.

## Reflect

- 3 Read verses 5 and 6 carefully and you will see that it is because of Jesus' love for this family that He chose to stay two more days. Does that make sense to you? Why or why not?
- 4 What does Jesus' response to the implied request to heal Lazarus teach you about how God might answer prayer?
- 5 How would you describe Martha, and her interaction with Jesus? How about Mary, and hers?
- 6 Generally speaking, the second half of verse 25 is about Lazarus, while verse 26 is about Martha, and by extension, you and me. Why do you think Jesus identifies the resurrection and life as something that He is rather than something that He offers? What does Jesus mean by "never die"?

- 7 In the shortest verse in the English translation of the Bible, we learn that, “Jesus wept.” Why do you think He wept? How does it make you feel to read about the Son of God demonstrating such strong, human emotions?
- 8 Read Jesus’ prayer in verses 41-42. What does Jesus’ prayer reveal about His relationship with the Father, and His intentions for this miracle?
- 9 In verse 45, we read about two different responses to the miracle. Why do you think that some of the witnesses of this miracle chose to go and tell the opponents of Jesus about it? What do you think you would have done and why?
- 10 Who do you identify with the most in the story? Why?





## So, I am . . .

The verb “to believe” occurs seven times in this passage, and is clearly expressed as the goal of Jesus’ actions. The varied reactions of those who hear of it leave us with a question: how will we respond? In chapter 20, John gives a clear purpose statement for the recording of the signs that Jesus did. He says, “these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” (John 20:31). John’s purpose for his whole work, which culminates in the resurrection of Jesus, matches perfectly with the goal of Lazarus’ resurrection: belief in Jesus. And John goes a step farther; the goal is not just to *believe*, but that by believing, we may have life.

**Read Ephesians 2:1-8, and consider the similarities between you and Lazarus, who have both been raised to life by Him who is both the resurrection and the life. Discuss your obstacles. What can help you get past these obstacles?**



# the way, truth & life

SESSION FIVE

**JESUS SAID TO HIM, "I AM  
THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH,  
AND THE LIFE. NO ONE  
COMES TO THE FATHER  
EXCEPT THROUGH ME.  
IF YOU HAD KNOWN  
ME, YOU WOULD  
HAVE KNOWN MY  
FATHER ALSO.  
FROM NOW ON  
YOU DO KNOW  
HIM AND  
HAVE SEEN  
HIM."**

<sup>1</sup> “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.

<sup>2</sup> In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. <sup>4</sup> And you know the way to where I am going.”

<sup>5</sup> Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” <sup>6</sup> Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup> If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.

<sup>8</sup> Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.”

<sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? <sup>10</sup> Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. <sup>11</sup> Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. <sup>12</sup> “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup> Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup> If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.”

## Open

- 1 Recall a time you were talking to someone and they just weren't getting what you were saying? How did it make you feel? How did they respond to your emotions?
- 2 Why don't you like backseat drivers? What is most offensive about someone telling you the right way to go?

### **JESUS HAS FINALLY CONVINCED HIS DISCIPLES THAT HE IS LEAVING, AND THEY CAN'T BEAR THE THOUGHT.**

They want to follow, but the destination is heaven and the path is impossible for man to travel. How can Jesus reassure His disciples about their future, knowing He is about to die? In a nutshell, Jesus says “don't worry, I'll come back and get you.” But in matters of life and death that is an insufficient explanation. So, Jesus packs His assurances with some of the most profound claims you'll find in scripture. Indeed, probably the most amazing claims in human history. No rational philosopher, religious leader, thinker, or even mystic has ever claimed anything so radical as Jesus does right here. He alone embodies the truth and even life itself. He alone provides the way to God. He even claims deity—the visible manifestation of God. In today's lesson, take the time to consider how profound and far reaching Jesus' claims are.



## Reflect

- 3 Reread John 14:2-5. Describe what Thomas was looking for. Where does Jesus say He is going?
- 4 The Way. Read Hebrews 10:19-20. What specifics does that passage give you on the way to the Father? What are “holy places” and “curtain” referring to and to what is the author paralleling it?
- 5 The Truth. Read John 18:37-38. In a dictionary (or on your phone) lookup the definition of ‘Truth.’ In what way (or ways) are Jesus and Pilate using the word? Why would Pilate question that there is any truth?
- 6 The Life. Read 1 John 5:10-12. What do you think it means to “have life” in this passage?
- 7 Read John 5:21-24. What power do both God the Father and God the Son have? What sort of life is Jesus talking about and how can you get it?

- 8** In John 14:1 Jesus says, “Let not your hearts be troubled.” Jesus is about to go to the cross, but why do you think the disciples would be troubled? In what way does John 14:6-7 give them comfort? In what ways do Jesus’ claims bring you comfort?
- 9** Jesus statement that no one comes to the Father but through Him is immediately offensive to modern hearers. But His offer is actually open to all, inclusive and free. It does not require being in the inner circle, having hidden knowledge, or entering through secret rites of passage. List some organizations, companies, schools, countries, and religions. How do you join them? Who can get in and who can’t? Contrast those with Jesus’ offer.
- 10** You have to love Thomas. His statement in John 14:5 is direct, simple, and honest. Who in your circle of friends is most like Thomas? How would you explain Jesus’ response in verse 6 to that person?





## So, I am . . .

The famous Hindu mystic Ramakrishna wrote, “God can be realized through all paths. All religions are true.” That is such a wonderful sentiment, but it can’t be true. We need to face the fact that everyone is in Thomas’ shoes. We don’t know exactly where the Father’s House is, so we certainly don’t know how to get there. The only possible way we can be reconciled to God the Father is by God Himself reaching out to us. We simply cannot invent our own Way, define our own Truth, and create our own Life. All that must be revealed to us. Praise God for revealing Himself and His plan by sending His son to us twice: First, to tell us the good news and through His death to open the Father’s front door, and second, to come back and take us home.

**Imagine you are telling someone about Jesus, and they give the common response, “I’m glad that works for you. After all, ‘all paths lead to God.’” How will you explain Jesus’ open invitation and why it is different than all other religions? Who might need this conversation? Pray that God would open a door for loving, truthful interaction.**



# vine

SESSION SIX

**“I AM THE TRUE VINE,  
AND MY FATHER IS THE  
VINEDRESSER. EVERY  
BRANCH IN ME THAT  
DOES NOT BEAR FRUIT HE  
TAKES AWAY, AND EVERY  
BRANCH THAT DOES BEAR  
FRUIT HE PRUNES, THAT  
IT MAY BEAR MORE FRUIT.**

<sup>1</sup> “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup> Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup> Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. <sup>5</sup> I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. <sup>7</sup> If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup> By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. <sup>9</sup> As

the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. <sup>12</sup> This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup> No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.”



## Open

- 1 Describe a time you went to a vineyard. What was most memorable about the experience?
- 2 Come up with your own analogy: “Vinedresser is to vine as \_\_\_\_\_ is to \_\_\_\_\_.” Try to capture the relationship between the two as best you can. How does your analogy succeed and how does it fail to capture the relationship that Jesus is describing?

**THOUGH MANY OF US MAY LIVE CLOSE TO AGRICULTURE OR EVEN VINEYARDS,** it is more likely that we know the taste of wine better than the process that brings wine to our table. “Vinedressing” is simply foreign, but the metaphor can’t be lost on us. Throughout the pages of John’s Gospel account, we consistently run into questions posed by those who come into contact with Jesus. It is as if John wants to have a single question floating in the back of our minds: “Who is this Jesus?” so that each of Jesus’ dialogs and these “I am” metaphors can shed new light on His identity and purpose. This week’s passage is no different, and it is in this statement that Jesus is presented in relation to another—the Father.

# Reflect

- 3 Imagine a farmer. What is the farmer's job? What is his goal? What can get in the way of that goal? Why might Jesus use this idea for God the Father?
- 4 In John 15:3-4, Jesus speaks of abiding in the vine. What else does He say to "abide in" in the following verses and what is the parallel that John is creating? How do you interpret this parallel?
- 5 Read Matthew 21:33-46. What is purpose of the story? Who is the "vinedresser" (vineyard owner)? To whom is Jesus addressing the parable?
- 6 If Isaiah 5:1-7 describes God's relationship to Israel, what does today's passage communicate about the relationship between God, Israel, and Jesus?

- 7 There is a progression from John 15:1 to John 15:5. What are the implications of these relationships to the “vine”?
- 8 What are the Father’s specific tasks in this metaphor? What do they have in common? Do you see the tasks as more positive or negative? Why?
- 9 Have you ever felt like God saw you as dead wood that was being “cut off” only to realize later that He was pruning you so you could create more and better fruit? Explain.



## So, I am . . .


The Book of John has very little ethical teaching. Unlike Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount, John rarely points the listener to "be this way" and "not that way." However, the metaphors that we hear coming from the lips of Jesus are insanely powerful.

"Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit."

"If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned."

**This should give us pause. Where these ethical "word pictures" lack detail they make up for in potency. What does "bearing fruit" mean in your life? Does it align with Jesus' words in today's passage? Take this week to write down three "fruitful" activities that you want to increase, and three "unfruitful" activities you want to decrease. Make a plan and ask your group to help you stay accountable. Most importantly, look to the Vine as your source of fruitfulness and change.**





“Truly, truly I say  
to you, before  
Abraham was,  
**I am.**”

John 8:58



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