

# 1.3

## I AM

### LESSON BIG IDEA

I will call on the name of Jesus, recognizing I am calling on the one God of the Bible.

### FOCUS VERSES

#### John 8:58

Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

### LESSON TEXT

#### John 8:39–59

### TRUTH ABOUT GOD

The Lord revealed Himself to Moses and to the first-century Jews as I AM.



### Thinking about Last Week:

Have students refer to their Daily Devotional Guide to answer the following questions:

1. What most affected you as you read through the Bible Reading Plan, the Lesson Text, and the Biblical Insights?
2. How did it shape your prayers and thoughts throughout the week?
3. Do you feel you grew closer to the Lord this past week? Why or why not?

## LESSON CONNECTION I

### Teacher Option:

Show Image to help illustrate the Lesson Connection.

While driving through town in his shiny, new, red pickup truck and listening to the radio, Joe heard an ad for the singing competition *American Idol*. Joe cringed at hearing the word *idol*. He believed no one should ever put a singer or anyone else on a pedestal. In no way, shape, or form should these people be worshiped as if they were a god. Joe prayed a silent prayer, thanking the Lord that he had no idols in his life.



As Joe continued on with his day, the Lord tried to teach him a lesson. Returning to his truck after running an errand, Joe noticed a big dent on the side of his prized possession. Someone had carelessly slammed a car door into his truck. Maybe he could patch it up by getting a dent repair kit and smoothing out the dent, but the task might prevent him from making it to Wednesday evening service. He hated to miss, but the truck demanded his attention.

Sadly, Joe would also miss service on Sunday. He had bought a nice boat for bass fishing on the lake. He looked forward to showing off his new truck and his new boat down at the docks. No doubt many of his friends and neighbors would be jealous. He was sure the Lord would bless him with a great haul of fish, just like He blessed Peter, Andrew, James, and John. Joe planned to bring home the fish and fry them up on his new grill. Even if he got back in time for Sunday evening service, he would probably be too tired to make it to church. His recliner would be very inviting. Like a fish on the line, he would not be able to resist its pull.

As Joe heard the *American Idol* commercial play again, he smugly said out loud, "Thank the Lord that I have no idols in my life."

Joe seems strangely similar to the Jews in the first century. They thought they knew everything about Jehovah, and they boldly proclaimed that they would not put anything in front of Him. Yet, when Jesus appeared right before their eyes, they had no idea He was the God who had also appeared to Moses in the burning bush. Blinded by ignorance and anger, they wanted to stone Him for proclaiming to be the Great I AM.

Although we rejoice in the revelation of the oneness of God, we must be careful not to lose sight of the identity of Jesus by allowing possessions and other things to pull us away from God. While we may know that calling on Jesus means calling on the one God of the Bible, we may not always act like it. When we neglect church, prayer time, and Bible study for our modern-day idols, we are more like the first-century Jews who failed to realize the greatness of the one in their midst.



## **SG** TEACHING OUTLINE

**Icebreaker:** What would be your dream car to own?

**Lesson Connection:** Share the Lesson Connection on page 155. **I**

### I. JEHOVAH IS THE GREAT I AM

#### A. / AM Means “He Is” or “He Will Be”

» *Many people talk about God so much in the world that the Almighty might seem commonplace. How can we reignite a desire in ourselves and others to know more about the God we serve?*

#### B. / AM Can Refer to God’s Self-Existence or Eternality

#### C. God Is Everything We Need

» *How has God shown you in the past that He knew your needs before you asked? What do you need to trust Him for now?*

### II. JESUS IDENTIFIED HIMSELF AS THE I AM

#### A. Jesus’ Self-Identity Caused Many to Believe in Him

» *How has Jesus revealed Himself to you?*

#### B. The Religious Leaders Knew He Claimed to Be God

#### C. Jesus Is Everything We Need

» *How do our expectations sometimes prevent us from receiving what Jesus has for us?* **V**

### III. THERE IS ONLY ONE I AM

#### A. Jehovah Manifested Himself in Flesh as Jesus Christ

#### B. The Name Jesus Means “Jehovah Savior”

#### C. When We Call on Jesus, We Are Calling on the One God of the Bible

» *What is so significant about the name of Jesus, especially when it comes to prayer and baptizing believers?*



### Internalizing the Message

#### Prayer Focus

- For a revelation of who Jesus is to come to our nation and world
- For needs individuals may have, because Jesus is everything we need

## LESSON COMMENTARY

### I. JEHOVAH IS THE GREAT I AM

Almost everyone in the ancient world believed in gods. While some atheists have pointed to religious skepticism in ancient texts, atheism had virtually no significant presence in the ancient world. In fact, polytheists found it strange when the Israelites declared that they worshiped the one true God, Jehovah. Polytheists even accused the Israelite monotheists of being atheists because they did not worship the large pantheon of gods.

Travelers to the land of Israel likely would have expressed great surprise upon hearing of this strange monotheistic devotion. They probably had many questions. If they stayed in a household truly loyal to Jehovah and not overtaken with idols, then the host family might have told their guests the story of Moses learning about Jehovah, the Great I AM.

#### A. *I AM* Means “He Is” or “He Will Be”

The Lord spoke to Moses from the burning bush and called him to deliver the Israelite slaves out of bondage in Egypt. The reluctant Moses had no desire to return to Egypt. The *Most Wanted* posters for his murder of an Egyptian likely still littered the land of the Nile. If Moses returned to Egypt, Pharaoh would send out the paddy wagon instead of the welcome wagon. Like his ancestor Joseph, Moses would find himself confined to an Egyptian prison.

To help Moses, the Lord gave him some miracles to perform. Moses, however, anticipated a question the Hebrew slaves might ask. Moses said, “Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?” The Lord replied by identifying Himself as “I AM THAT I AM” (Exodus 3:13-14). The Hebrew language of the text reveals essential characteristics about the nature of God. Since *I AM* can be translated “He is” or “He will be,” we see God as one not confined to space or time but transcending it.

*Many people talk about God so much in the world that the Almighty might seem commonplace. How can we reignite a desire in ourselves and others to know more about the God we serve?*

#### B. *I AM* Can Refer to God’s Self-Existence or Eternality

To the finite human mind, the concept of anything existing without something else generating it seems impossible. Yet the *I AM* always was. We can never go back to a time when God did not exist. Human logic functions on the very basic level of cause and effect. We learn by identifying causes and their effects. The *I AM*, however, defied human reasoning.

Because God exists over and above time, the name *I AM* can also refer to the eternal nature of God. God not only always was, but God always will be. God has not simply existed throughout all of time. God existed before time began and is the Creator of time. On the fourth day of Creation, God set a greater light (the sun) to rule the day



and a lesser light (the moon) to rule the night. These two heavenly bodies govern the laws of space and time, creating gravitational forces and a way for humans to measure time by the revolution of the Earth around the sun. To many people in the ancient world, the sun and moon represented deities they worshiped. A quick reading of Genesis 1 disproves this notion. God not only created the sun that the Egyptians worshiped and the moon that other cultures revered, but these celestial bodies worked for the I AM, delineating time. The Great I AM stood above them and all of creation.

### C. God Is Everything We Need

Because God has always existed and easily sees the past, present, and future, God is everything we need. When the I AM spoke to Moses, He saw the Israelites in slavery. He heard the cries of past and present generations of slaves. He also saw a future where a hesitant shepherd accepted the mantle of leadership and delivered God's people.

*How has God shown you in the past that He knew your needs before you asked? What do you need to trust Him for now?*

The omniscient, omnipresent, all-powerful I AM knows the things we need before we even ask (Matthew 6:8). Before we even breathe the first word of prayer, the Lord has seen our condition and has already prepared the answer. Since He heard and answered the cries of the Israelites, we should believe He will answer us and deliver us.

## II. JESUS IDENTIFIED HIMSELF AS THE I AM

In the first century, much of the jury remained unconvinced about the identity of Jesus. Various witnesses offered conflicting testimonies. Some thought Jesus was the Messiah. Others thought He was a great man who came from God. Still others viewed Jesus as some sort of magician or trickster, attempting to draw the people away from the religious and political structure represented by the Jewish Temple and the Roman government. Even the disciples of Jesus struggled to identify Him, often expressing confusion when He spoke of His true nature.

Jesus, however, made a very bold statement at the end of John 8. He set up this statement by providing clues to His identity in the chapter with the words "I am." When Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" in verse 12, many people probably thought He was using a common subject and verb. When He said, "I am from above . . . I am not of this world" in verse 23, they probably became a bit more concerned. However, when He said, "Before Abraham was, I am" in verse 58, Jesus' opponents knew He had crossed a line. Jesus had used the ultimate pronoun and the ultimate state of being to identify Himself as the I AM Moses met at the burning bush. Jesus even claimed to predate Abraham, the father of the Jews.

### A. Jesus' Self-Identity Caused Many to Believe in Him

As Jesus strategically went from hinting at His identity to more boldly proclaiming it, many people believed in Him. These

believing Jews had long waited for the Messiah to reveal Himself. Now Jesus had proven Himself through signs, wonders, and miracles. Just like at the burning bush, however, the essential truth came not from the miraculous feat but from the revelatory explanation. The people knew and understood that Jesus was identifying Himself as the Great I AM, the one true God.

*How has Jesus revealed Himself to you?*

## **B. The Religious Leaders Knew He Claimed to Be God**

As Jesus' self-identification went from subtle clues to blatant claims, the religious leaders grew incensed. They knew Jesus claimed to be God. But rather than considering they had the privilege of meeting the I AM, who had revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush, they believed instead that Jesus was guilty of blasphemy.

They might have excused some of the things He said. Although they hated being called the children of the devil when they identified themselves as the children of Abraham, they might have let Jesus' insult slide. But when Jesus crossed the line for them and identified Himself as I AM, they wanted to stone Him. They could not handle the truth.

## **C. Jesus Is Everything We Need**

Jesus was everything the Jews needed. But they failed to recognize the Messiah because He did not meet their expectations. Even though Jesus knew what they needed before He even appeared on the scene, they did not recognize Jesus as the fulfillment of prophecy and their needs.

In a world full of all kinds of potential answers and solutions, we must be careful to avoid making the same mistake. We must not look for deliverance in drugs, alcohol, sex, and other sins, while ignoring the one who says, "I AM the answer." We must not choose our own stubbornness and pride over Jesus. We must not think Jesus has crossed a line and crucify Him again. We must realize Jesus is truly everything we need.

*How do our expectations sometimes prevent us from receiving what Jesus has for us? **V***

## **III. THERE IS ONLY ONE I AM**

While the ancient world had many gods in people's homes, in temples, and in shrines, there was only one I AM. Even many Israelites failed to realize this grand revelation and turned to idolatry. They worshiped false gods. These fake gods had no power to deliver because they did not exist. Many people in today's world may feel they have a strong understanding of the I AM. They believe they do not own a single idol. Nevertheless, they should do an inventory of their lives. They might discover that possessions and worldly desires represent idols and stumbling blocks in their lives.

There is only one I AM. The I AM will not share His praise with others. The I AM does not want to be put on the shelf and ignored like some common idol.

**Teacher Option:**  
*Show Video to either take the place of the question or to help illustrate it.*



### A. Jehovah Manifested Himself in Flesh as Jesus Christ

We can only worship the I AM in spirit and in truth when we know His identity. Many people believe in the doctrine of the Trinity. They separate the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. However, the Bible teaches us about the unity of the one true God. Jesus Christ is Jehovah Himself manifested in flesh.

John 1:14 states, “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” First Timothy 3:16 gives us further insight into Jehovah manifesting Himself in flesh: “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” The verse describes everything Jesus did. Since God is the subject, then we know Jesus is Jehovah in the flesh.

### B. The Name *Jesus* Means “Jehovah Savior”

Even the name *Jesus* reveals the key truth about His identity. Jesus means “Jehovah Savior.” Isaiah 12:2 proclaims, “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.” We could easily and acceptably change the last word of the verse to *Jesus*. Doing so would cause the verse to proclaim that the Lord Jehovah also is become my Jesus. Jesus is Jehovah. Jesus saves us from sin. Jesus saves us from sickness. Jesus saves us from addiction. And if we humble ourselves and have a heart willing to receive illumination, Jesus saves us from misunderstanding His true nature and identity.

### C. When We Call on Jesus, We Are Calling on the One God of the Bible

Such an all-powerful, awesome, and magnificent deity may sometimes seem very distant from us. The idea of the Lord of the cosmos paying any attention to us may seem strange. Jesus, however, bridged the gap. God manifested in the flesh came to us.

Therefore, when we call on Jesus, we are calling on the one God of the Bible. When we pray, we pray in the name of Jesus because Jesus is the name of the Father. When we pray in the name of Jesus, we are invoking the power of the Lord of the universe. Although we are finite, the name of Jesus connects us to the infinite power that comes from the Holy Spirit. And while we rejoice when the name of Jesus brings miracles, signs, and wonders, we must never forget the power of the revelation of the one God we serve. He is the Great I AM. He is Jehovah Savior. We know Him as Jesus.

*What is so significant about the name of Jesus, especially when it comes to prayer and baptizing believers?*

## INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

**M**aurice was headed to the plant for the early shift, straining to peer into the black fog. He could remember foggy mornings before, but this dawn might be the foggiest he could remember in years. It was a struggle to discern the lines of the highway, so he primarily pushed the car into the darkness by instinct and memory of the familiar road.

When the sight of the giant cow loomed in the headlights, he fought denial—how could there suddenly be a cow mere feet ahead? No time to rationalize the emergency, he instinctively bellowed the name of Jesus, closed his eyes, and braced for impact. He didn't even touch the brakes because the collision was so certain. But half a second passed and then another. He opened his eyes to mere darkness again. He looked in the mirror as he slowed the car and pulled over to get his breathing and heart rate under control.

There had been a cow. It was as real as the steering wheel he clutched in his trembling grip. There was darkness and then the cow and then his prayer. Can a single word count as a prayer? he wondered. Unsure and alone in the darkness, he decided to extend it into a longer prayer of gratitude to God.

After a few moments, he nosed the sedan back onto the dark road and continued his drive. His thoughts continued too. If he had been so quick to call on Jesus' name in his moment of disaster, why did he keep resisting the Bible study teacher's insistence that the name of Jesus was the only biblical pattern for baptism? And since Jesus had so miraculously rescued him from the sure danger this morning, why not call out to him every morning in prayer before the potential of a crisis ever began?

"Lord Jesus, I need You," he began quietly, and so began his new life.

