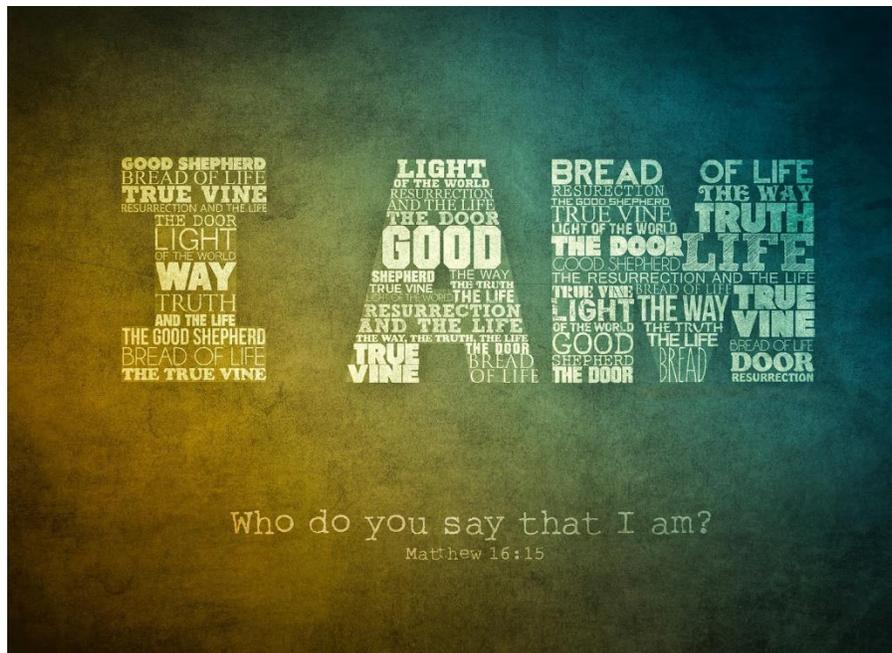


I AM

Six Week Small Group Series on the “I AM” Statements of Jesus in the Book of John





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Instructions for the Study

A thematic study is a great discipleship tool. This Study has been designed to have two main components each week.

1. Personal Study at Home (including study notes)
2. Small Group Session

The Personal study at home allows the participant to reflect on the Bible themes and passages at home and work through personal application questions on their own. Then, the person comes to the small group meeting ready to share what God has already been showing them.

The small group conversations and discussions are useful in diving deeper into the topic and seeing things from a different perspective or helping you see something that you may have missed when studying the topic at home on your own.

Doing a thematic study can be very simple. Just follow the template given for each session and make sure that each member of your group has a copy of this booklet so they can journal their responses and come to the small group meeting ready to share. This helps the small group time stay focused and gives everyone an opportunity to think through what they would like to share, adding value to the small group time.

If you have any questions about facilitating this Bible Study, give the church office a call. Someone from Cell Ministry would be happy to speak to you.

Session One: I AM the Bread of Life

Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

2. Read: John 6 and the Session 1 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

3. Questions to Consider

- Verses 1-13: What insights does this passage give you into how Jesus may be at work in the difficult situations in your life?
- Verses 22-33: The next day the people were hungry again, so they come seeking Jesus (vs. 22-25). How does Jesus try to redirect their thinking (vs. 26-33)?
- Verses 52-59: When Jesus says, "This bread is my flesh," the crowd thinks only of cannibalism (vs. 52). What do you think it means to eat Jesus' flesh and drink His blood (vs. 53-59)?
- Verses 60-71: Jesus turns away from the crowd and focuses on the disciples. How would you describe their response to His "hard" teaching? Which response best describes your present attitude toward Jesus. Why did you choose that answer?

4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this material into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

6. Prayer

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

7. **Optional:** Pick a verse(s) from this week's Bible passage and memorize it.

Part Two: I AM the Bread of Life Study Notes

- Jesus first “I Am” statement comes the day after the great miracle of the feeding of the 5000.
- The previous day Jesus was in the region of Galilee.
- A great multitude followed Him because they saw His miracles (vs. 2).
- Jesus raised the question in vs. 5, “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?”
- The disciples were perplexed, not knowing where they would get enough food. They could only find a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish (vs. 9).
- Jesus told the disciple to have the people sit down and then began to distribute the loaves and fish (vs. 11-12).
- God’s supply was extravagant, each could eat as much as they wanted, afterwards the leftovers were gathered and filled twelve baskets (vs. 12-13).
- The crowd began to murmur that Jesus was the Prophet that they were expecting, as prophesied in the Old Testament (vs. 14).
- They intended to make Jesus king by force (vs. 15). This title of king would be a political title. The people wanted to use Jesus to free them from Roman oppression.
- Jesus was not interested in their social and political cause as He could see past the surface issues into the heart of the matter.
- Jesus wasn’t seduced by a crowd that wanted to declare Him king giving Him civil power. His calling was to be a King in a different realm.
- When evening came the disciples went down to the Sea of Galilee and set off to Capernaum by boat (vs. 16). Jesus did not join them but remained alone.
- The wind disrupted the disciple’s efforts to cross the Sea (vs. 18).
- They struggled for several miles when they saw Jesus walking on the water, coming towards them (vs. 19); and they were terrified.
- Jesus responded with calming words, “It is I; don’t be afraid” (vs. 20).
- Jesus came to bring help and comfort to His disciples. Upon entering the boat, it immediately was at the land where they were going (vs. 21). This was a remarkable miracle.
- The following day the crowd could not figure out what had happened to Jesus. There was only one boat and Jesus was not in it when the disciples left the night before. So, the crowd began to search for Jesus, heading to Capernaum (vs. 22-24).
- When they found Jesus on the other side, they asked Him how he got there (vs. 25).
- Jesus did not answer this question.
- Instead, of telling them how He got there, Jesus told them why they came to Him – because they wanted more food to be miraculously provided by Him (vs. 26).
- We can learn a lot from the reason we ask God a question. This was the case with the crowd who followed Jesus to the other side of the lake. These people went to a lot of trouble to find Jesus. Yet their work was for the food that perishes (vs. 27).
- Jesus wanted them to labour for the food that endures forever.
- Here we see Jesus making the contrast between material and spiritual things.
- The crowd was rightly impressed with the miracle of the feeding of the 5000 but Jesus wanted them to be more impressed with the spiritual food that He had for them.
- The crowd then asks a second question, “What must we do to do the works God requires?” (vs. 28).
- This question seems to imply that they could get what they wanted from Him if they could please Him with good works.
- Jesus response, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one He has sent” (vs. 29).

- Salvation is truly based on faith and not on works.
- A third question now comes from the crowd, “What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe in you? What will you do? Our forefathers ate manna in the desert; as it is written: He gave them bread from heaven to eat” (vs. 30-31).
- It was like the crowd was trying to manipulate Jesus into supplying them with food, even quoting Scripture in the attempt.
- We can paraphrase Jesus response like this: “What other work will I do? This is the work: to give you the Word of God and eternal life in and through Me. This is the spiritual bread you must feast on to have life.” (vs. 32-33).
- Jesus tried to get their minds off of earthly things and onto heavenly realities, to an understanding that He is necessary for spiritual life just as bread is necessary for physical survival.
- The final request of the crowd, “Give us this bread always” (vs. 34).
- Jesus answer, “I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE. He who comes to me will never go hungry and he who believes in me will never be thirsty” (vs. 35).
- This statement intends to lift their eyes from the material to the spiritual.
- If they would come to Him, receive Him, believe in Him – they would never be spiritually hungry.
- The final promise is one of eternal life (vs. 40).
- The people were not satisfied with this spiritual answer. They complain about Jesus, thinking what He said about Himself was too exalted. Jesus claimed to come from Heaven (vs. 33, 38, 41, 50, 51, 58), which was difficult for the crowd to accept as they saw Him as a man who grew up among them, the son of Joseph (vs. 42), how could he claim to be from heaven?
- Jesus interjects, “Stop grumbling among yourself. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him and I will raise him up at the last day.” (vs. 43-44).
- The Jews thought they were all chosen by God by virtue of their ethnic heritage. Jesus made it clear that there was more needed – faith in Him. And those who took this step would have eternal life and be resurrected at the last day.
- Jesus asserts His claim again, “I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE. (vs. 47-48).
- This is an astounding claim that was made by no other prophet – the claim to give eternal life.
- Verse 51: “I AM THE LIVING BREAD that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world.”
- What Jesus is saying is that they must come to Him to have eternal life.
- Jesus clearly explains what He means by bread in this context. The bread was His flesh, given for the life of the world. It was the work on the cross that He would do when He died as a living sacrifice, as substitute for guilty sinners.
- The confused crowd quarreled among themselves, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” (vs. 52). It was like they were willfully twisting His words to imply a bizarre cannibalism.
- Jesus restates things again, He doesn’t soften the message due to their response: “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day... Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them...” (vs. 53-58).
- Jesus responded to their willful misunderstanding by speaking even more boldly, amplifying the point made at John 6:51 – His “flesh” was His laid-down life.
- Jesus was using language that should be well understood by those well versed in the Old Testament Sacrifices. The ‘eating of the flesh and drinking of the blood’ was a plain allusion to the sacrificial system and pointed to His eventual sacrifice on the cross.

- Such radical statements offended many, but Jesus refused to back down from the truth: I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE.
- The response to Jesus message was that many turned away (vs. 60-64).
- What Jesus said was hard for many to accept, not to understand.
- Jesus knew this and inquires of His disciples, “Does this offend you?” (vs. 61).
- Jesus understood the offence many of His listeners took at His teaching, yet He didn’t change the teaching or feel it was His fault.
- If these truths offended them, what would they think when they see Him in glory, and have to answer to Him in judgment? (vs. 62). Better to be offended now and to get over it, than to be offended on that day.
- To summarize, when Jesus discouraged every material and earthly motive for following Him, many stopped following Him. This was a real and painful loss for Jesus.
- Finally, Jesus asks His disciples, “Do you want to leave too?” (vs. 67).
- Jesus searched the motives of all that follow Him, including the twelve.
- Their response, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know you are the Holy One of God.” (vs. 69).
- The disciples recognized Jesus as Lord; recognized the value of eternal things over material things, and recognized Jesus as the Messiah.

Part Three: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

1. Open in Prayer

2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

3. Discussion Questions

- In John 6 it is revealed that some people had false motives for following Jesus. What are some of the false motives people have in following Jesus today? What are the right motives for following Jesus?
- What makes you want to follow Jesus?
- How and when has God miraculously provided for your needs?
- What can you learn about standing for truth by the interaction Jesus had with the people in this John 6?

4. Sharing

- Share something from the study notes and the personal bible study that stood out to you and why.

5. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
 - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
 - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

5. Prayer

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province, and nation.

Session Two: I AM the Light of the World

Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

2. Read: John 8:12-30 and the Session 2 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

3. Questions to Consider

- Verse 12: first claim is “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life. What does it mean to walk in darkness? How has following Jesus brought light into your life?
Verse 19-30: Jesus reference to the Father leads to His second claim – that He came from God. In what way does this claim heighten the tension between Jesus and His opponents?
- Verse 24: Jesus says, “If you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.” What is the response of our contemporary culture to that claim?

4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this material into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

6. Prayer

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

7. Optional: Pick a verse(s) from this week’s Bible passage and memorize it.

Part Two: I AM the Light of the World Study Notes

- This passage of Scripture starts with Jesus making an I Am statement. Many scholars believe that this teaching was a continuation of Jesus teaching at the Feast of Tabernacles in John 7.
- “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.” (vs. 12).
- Light was an important symbol in the Feast of Tabernacles.
- During the feast, many emblems and ceremonies remembered the pillar of fire that gave light to Israel during the Exodus.
- Now, Jesus took this important symbol and simply applied it to Himself.
- Jesus, being the light of the world, brings light to those who follow Him.
- When we follow Him, we stay in the light and do not walk in darkness.
- The Pharisees challenged Jesus assertion, “Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid” (vs. 13).
- The Pharisees couldn’t see Jesus as the light because they were blind, not because the light of Jesus failed to shine.
- Because the Pharisees couldn’t prove that Jesus was not the Messiah that He claimed to be they changed the argument.
- Jesus answered, ““Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going. You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one. But if I do judge, my decisions are true, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me. In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me.” (vs. 14-18).
- Jesus would agree that under normal circumstances, a man’s testimony regarding Himself could not be established as true.
- Nevertheless, Jesus pointed out that He was qualified to give testimony about Himself:
- Jesus knew that the Jews required two witnesses to satisfy the Jewish law. Jesus provided those witnesses in Himself and God the Father.
- “I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me” (vs. 18).
- Though the religious leaders protested, Jesus was absolutely settled and secure in His identity, despite all the voices that told Him otherwise.
- The Pharisees then question, “Where is your father?” (vs. 19).
- They may have intended this to be an insult to Jesus referring to the controversy about His virgin birth and the rumors that it was not a miraculous conception but an impure one.
- In referring to his parentage, Jesus replies, “You know neither me nor my father” (vs. 19). This comment is saying that if they knew Him they would know His Father.
- The Pharisees poked at Jesus to see how He would react. In response, Jesus made it clear that they did not know anything about Him or his Father.
- They prided themselves in their knowledge of God but proved they did not know Him.
- Jesus goes on to tell of His coming departure, “I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come” (vs. 21). Jesus was going to heaven, and where He was going they could not follow.
- Their response, “Will He kill himself” (vs. 22).
- Was this another insult against Jesus? The Jews believed that the lowest levels of Hades were for those who committed suicide. Here the Pharisees twist Jesus words to imply suicide.

- Jesus answered that they did have different destinies, just not as they thought.
- These men were religious leaders yet lived in darkness that filled their mind and their deeds.
- Jesus gave them a serious warning; the day of grace would not last forever.
- “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins” (vs. 23-24).
- People are born in sin (Psalm 51:5), and if we hold on to our sin, and do not deal with it, we will die in our sins.
- Since all sin must be dealt with, those who die in their sins will have to pay for their sins in hell.
- But if we have our sins dealt with now, on this side of death, by trusting in Jesus and what He did to save us, we can avoid dying in our sins.
- The Pharisees question again, “Who are you?” (vs. 25).
- Though Jesus told them again and again who He was, they continued to ask, always hoping for an answer they could use to trap and condemn Him.
- Jesus didn’t have a new answer for them. He would repeat the truths and themes He had spoken to them many times before. Again He emphasized that His words are from God the Father.
- This passage concludes with Jesus referring to His crucifixion (vs. 28). His death would be His vindication, it would show that everything He said was true.
- There is perfect unity between the Father and the Son. Jesus was always did what was pleasing to the Father (vs. 29). The cross would prove His perfect obedience.
- As Jesus spoke the Pharisees became more opposed to Him. Yet there were many who heard the same words and believed in Him (vs. 30).
- To those who believed Him He said, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (vs. 31).
- If we will be Jesus’ disciples, we *must* abide in His Word.
- Knowing the truth is a byproduct of abiding in Jesus.
- The freedom Jesus spoke of doesn’t come from just an academic pursuit of truth in general; but from abiding in His Word and being His disciple.

Part Three: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

1. Open in Prayer

2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

3. Discussion Questions

- In what way is Jesus a "light"?
- How is Jesus the light in your world?
- How is Jesus' relationship with God an example for our relationship with God?
- In what way can you testify on behalf of Jesus this week?

4. Sharing

- Share something from the study notes and the personal bible study that stood out to you and why.

5. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
 - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
 - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

6. Prayer

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province, and nation.

Session Three: I AM the Gate & I AM the Good Shepherd

Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

2. Read: John 10:1-18 and the Session 3 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

3. Questions to Consider

- There is much figurative language in this passage. Read the passage again, identify who and what these images represent and list the characteristics of each.
 - The sheep pen
 - The sheep
 - The shepherd
 - The gate
 - The thief
 - The hired hand
- Verses 1-6: What is the significance of the sheep hearing the shepherd's voice? What does that look like between the believer and Jesus in our present-day context?
- Verses 11-15: In these verses Jesus talks about the shepherd's care for his sheep. What can you learn from those verses about Jesus' care and relationship with you?
- Verses 17-18: Why do you think Jesus stresses that He lays down His life of His own accord?

4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this material into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

6. Prayer

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

7. Optional: Pick a verse(s) from this week's Bible passage and memorize it.

Part Two: I AM the Gate & I AM the Good Shepherd Study Notes

- In Jesus time, political and religious leaders were often called shepherds.
- Jesus explained that not everyone among the sheep is a true shepherd, some are like thieves and robbers.
- One mark of their being a thief or a robber is how they gain access to the sheep (vs. 1).
- The religious leaders gained their place among God's people – the sheep spoken of here – through personal and political connections, through formal education, through ambition, manipulation, and corruption.
- A true shepherd comes in the legitimate and designed way: through love, calling, care, and sacrificial service.
- God always intended that His people be led, fed, and protected by good shepherds.
- There is a purpose for the door. Some will climb over the barriers, but God has the barriers and a door there for a reason.
- Jesus says, "the one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep (vs. 2).
- In this metaphor, Jesus says that the gate has a gatekeeper (vs. 3).
- The gatekeeper watches who comes in and who goes out and knows the true shepherd and appropriately grants him access.
- The shepherd calls the sheep by name, showing that the shepherd has a personal connection with the sheep.
- The sheep know His voice (vs. 3). In the common sheepfolds of ancient times, the shepherd merely gave his distinctive call and his sheep came out from the others, following him out of the sheepfold. Sheep are experts at discerning their shepherd's voice. They follow Him because they know His voice (vs. 4).
- Sheep won't follow a stranger (vs. 5), in fact, they will run away because they do not know the strangers voice.
- Jesus used this illustration, but the Pharisees did not understand what He was telling them (vs. 6).
- Therefore, Jesus continued, "I AM THE GATE FOR THE SHEEP" (vs. 7).
- Jesus continues teaching, using another picture from sheep farming.
- Out in the pasturelands for sheep, pens were made with only one entrance.
- The door for those sheep pens was the shepherd himself. He laid his body across the entrance, to keep the sheep in and to keep out the wolves. The shepherd was in fact the door.
- Jesus then states that "All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers" (vs. 8).
- False shepherds are the Pharisees and the chief priests, not the true Old Testament Prophets.
- As the gate, anyone who enters through Jesus will be saved (vs. 9). They will come in and go out and find pasture. This refers to the freedom of daily life.
- The false shepherds are thieves that come to steal, kill, and destroy (vs. 10).
- Jesus brings fullness of life (vs. 10). This does not mean an especially long life, or a life that is easy or comfortable but rather the abundant life is a life of satisfaction and contentment with Jesus.
- I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD (vs. 11).
- Jesus said it so plainly there could be no mistake what He meant.
- He fulfills the ideal of shepherd-like care for the people of God.
- The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep (vs. 11).
- What Jesus described as a good shepherd is actually a very remarkable shepherd.
- Shepherds may take risks for the safety of the sheep, but it is probably rare to find one who would willingly die for their sheep
- When the sheep are threatened, a hired hand would abandon the sheep and run away (vs. 12) because the hired hand cares nothing for the sheep (vs. 13). It's just a job.

- Jesus is the Good Shepherd (vs. 14) who lives and dies for the good of the sheep.
 - He sacrifices for the sheep.
 - He knows His sheep – their individualities and characteristics.
 - He is known by the sheep (vs. 14).
- Jesus work as the good shepherd was rooted in His close relationship with His Father; “the Father knows me, and I know the Father” (vs. 14).
- Jesus then speaks of other sheep that will be brought into the pen (vs. 16).
- These other sheep are Gentile believers who will also hear His voice.
- There will be one flock and one shepherd (vs. 16).
- There is only one flock because there is only one Shepherd. All hear, answer, and obey the same shepherd. It is a unity that comes through listening to the Good Shepherd.
- Jesus then claims to have power for life and death.
- “The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again” (vs. 17-18).
- Jesus had the power to lay down His life, and He had the power to take it up again.
- His death was completely voluntary. Jesus submitted to death and then emerged from it victoriously alive, according to the command received from the Father (vs. 18).

Part Three: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

1. Open in Prayer

2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

3. Discussion Questions

- How can we know the difference between God's voice and the voice of the "wisdom of the world"?
- As our good shepherd, Jesus goes ahead of us and provides us with guidance. What are some ways that Christ has guided you in the past?
- As our shepherd, Christ has laid down His life so that we can "have life and have it abundantly." What does it look like to live an abundant life now?
- One of the things that Jesus emphasizes about the shepherd/sheep relationship is the intimate knowledge they have for one another. How would you rate the intimacy of your relationship with Christ? What are some steps you can take to strengthen that intimacy?

4. Sharing

- Share something from the study notes and the personal bible study that stood out to you and why.

5. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
 - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
 - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

6. Prayer

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province and nation.

Session Four: I AM the Resurrection and the Life

Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

2. Read: John 11:1-45 and the Session 4 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

3. Questions to Consider

- Verses 4-5, 15: Why do you think Jesus deliberately delayed going to Mary and Martha when they summoned Him considering His deep love for them as His friends?
- Verses 28-38: Why do you think John emphasizes that Jesus is deeply moved by Mary's grief and anguish of those with her?
- Verse 45: How would you explain the fact that the people who saw the same miracle responded in two totally different ways?
- In what ways will this chapter change the way you respond to personal difficulty and the apparent delay of God?

4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this material into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

6. Prayer

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

7. Optional: Pick a verse(s) from this week's Bible passage and memorize it.

Part Two: I AM the Resurrection and the Life Study Notes

- The context for this passage is the death of Lazarus at the beginning of the chapter.
- Mary and Martha requested Jesus come to them as their brother was sick (vs. 1-3), but Jesus responds with a delay (vs. 4-6).
- After waiting a few days, He goes to Judea and Jerusalem (vs. 7-10). Judea was a dangerous place for Jesus because of the opposition from the religious leaders. Nevertheless, Jesus was willing to go there despite the warnings from His disciples.
- Jesus' disciples were shocked that He would return to the region of Judea when He was a wanted man there.
- Jesus responded with by saying that He still had work to do. The twelve hours were a figurative way to speak of the time allotted by God the Father for the earthly work of Jesus (vs. 9).
- In verse 11, Jesus tells them plainly of Lazarus' death using the familiar metaphor of sleep to describe death.
- In verse 17 we find Jesus arriving in Bethany, Lazarus had been dead for four days. This is significant as many Jews believed that the soul remained near the body for three days after death in hope of returning to it. Being that Lazarus had been dead for four days, all hope was gone.
- There was a large crowd who was still mourning the death of Lazarus (vs. 19).
- Martha went out to greet Jesus, showing her disappointment in Jesus's late arrival. "If you had been here, my brother would not have died" (vs. 21).
- She believed that Jesus was able to heal her brother while he was sick yet still alive.
- It is possible that she did not consider that Jesus was able to raise Lazarus from the dead now.
- With disease there was still hope but death was unconquerable.
- "Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You" (vs. 22). Martha was not confident that Jesus would raise her brother. Instead, she said that she would still trust Jesus *despite* this disappointment. This was a remarkable demonstration of faith, one that should be taken as an example.
- Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again" (vs. 23).
- Martha understood that Lazarus would rise with the righteous on the last day. She did not even consider that Jesus might immediately bring Lazarus up from the dead.
- Jesus said, I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die, and whoever lives by believing in me will never die (vs. 25-26).
- Jesus did not claim to *have* resurrection and life or *understand secrets* about resurrection and life.
- Instead Jesus dramatically said that He *is* the resurrection and the life.
- Jesus boldly challenged Martha to trust that He was the source of eternal life.
- Jesus presented Himself as the champion over death.
- Those that believe in Jesus appear to die, but yet they live. They are not in the grave; they are in Heaven for all eternity with Jesus.
- Jesus made an enormous claim: *I am* the resurrection and the life. He who believes *in Me*, though he may die, he shall live. Only God could say such things in truth.
- Jesus challenged Martha, "Do you believe?" (vs. 26).
- This was not something to be debated with intellect but with faith, to believe.
- Martha responded correctly, Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world (vs. 27).
- Martha then gets her sister Mary who rushed out to meet Jesus (vs. 28-32).
- Mary's words are remarkably similar to what Martha told Jesus, "If you had been here, my brother would not have died (vs. 32).
- Jesus saw her weeping and was troubled, asking to see the tomb (vs. 33-34).

- Verse 35 tells us that “Jesus wept”.
- Jesus shared in the grief of those who mourn showing that Jesus He was acquainted with grief, He was not ashamed to grieve, weep or cry, He identified with their sorrow, He had real human emotions, and He greatly loved people.
- As He arrived at the tomb, Jesus asked for the stone to be removed (vs. 39).
- Everybody thought this was a strange thing for Jesus to ask because by this time the body would have a bad smell.
- People probably thought that Jesus was so taken with grief that He wanted one last look at His dear friend Lazarus.
- Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?” (vs. 40).
- Jesus was fully capable of this miracle without the faith of Martha or Mary.
- But if they would *not* believe, then *they* would never see the glory of God. They could see the end result and be happy in that, but they would miss the glory of working together with God in the fulfillment of His plan.
- John 11: 41-44 So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.” When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”
- It was a remarkable step of faith to roll away the stone. Jesus compelled Mary and Martha to act on their faith and they did through obedience to His unusual request.
- Jesus then prayed publicly for the benefit of the listeners and called Lazarus to come forth from the grave. And he did!
- The reaction was that “many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him” (vs. 45).
- This was undeniably an impressive work of God, and for many it helped them put their trust in who Jesus said He was by seeing what He did.
- Jesus claimed to be the resurrection and the life, and He would ultimately conquer death on the cross and rise again, but for this day, He proved His power over death through resurrecting Lazarus.

Part Three: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

1. Open in Prayer

2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

3. Discussion Questions

- Have you ever felt that Jesus was delaying something that you really wanted?
- When have you thought you had a better plan for your life than the one God was working out?
- Considering that Jesus is the resurrection and the life, how does this change your perspective in life, suffering and even death?

4. Sharing

- Share something from the study notes and the personal bible study that stood out to you and why.

5. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
 - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
 - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

6. Prayer

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province and nation.

Session Five: I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life

Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

2. Read: John 14 and the Session 5 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

3. Questions to Consider

- Verses 1-4: How would the promises given in vs. 1-4 bring comfort and peace to His disciples?
- Verse 6-7: Given these verses, how would you answer someone who think there are many ways to God?
- Verse 15-27: In what ways is the Holy Spirit bringing comfort and help into your life?
- Verses 15-24: What is the relationship between our love and obedience to Jesus and His love and presence in our lives? How is this different from legalism (trying to earn Jesus love through good works)?

4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this material into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

6. Prayer

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

7. Optional: Pick a verse(s) from this week's Bible passage and memorize it.

Part Two: I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life Study Notes

- This chapter starts with a command to calm the troubled heart, “Let not your heart be troubled” (vs. 1).
- The disciples had reason to be troubled as in the previous chapter Jesus had just told them that one of them would betray Him and that they would all deny Him.
- The antidote for a troubled heart was to firmly put their trust in God and in Jesus Himself.
- In this statement Jesus is equating Himself with God the Father and that in doing so there is the radical promise of comfort and peace.
- In verses 2-4 Jesus helps them see beyond their earthly troubles by giving them a glimpse into the rewards of eternity.
- Jesus spoke of heaven with confidence, as real place that He was going to and where they would join Him someday.
- This included mansions that He was preparing for them.
- Jesus also promised to come again for the disciples (vs. 3).
- It is in this context that Thomas asks Jesus “how can we know the way?” (vs. 5).
- This question may lead us to believe that Thomas was confused and thought Jesus was talking about a literal location on earth, like a city. Thomas was seeing things in the natural realm and not the supernatural realm.
- Jesus reply, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (vs. 6).
- Jesus didn’t say that that He would show them the way; Jesus said that He is the way.
- Jesus didn’t say that He would teach them the truth; Jesus said that He is the truth.
- Jesus didn’t say that He would offer them the secrets of life; Jesus said that He is the life.
- Jesus also made the remarkable statement, “No one comes to the Father except through Me” (vs. 6).
- This is one of the most controversial things Jesus said in the Bible.
- Many people don’t mind saying that Jesus is one legitimate way to God, but they also would say that other religions and even individuals have their own legitimate ways to God.
- The Bible is exclusive – Jesus is the only way to eternal life.
- The Bible consistently presents one true God and Jesus consistently is presented as the only way to the one true God.
- Verse 7 says, “If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”
- Jesus explained why He was the only way to God; because He was and is the perfect representation of God. To know Jesus is to know God.
- Phillip then states, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” (vs. 8).
- Phillip had been close to Jesus yet still did not understand.
- Jesus gentle rebuke, “He who has seen me has seen the Father” reminded Phillip that to know Him was to know the Father.
- In verse 11 Jesus gives two pieces of evidence for our trust in Him. First, we can believe Jesus simply because of His person and words, second, we can also believe Him for the sake of the works that He miraculously did.
- Jesus and the Father are one in nature and also one in operation.
- Jesus calls His disciples to simply “believe” (vs. 11).

- The chapter concludes with three assurances for their troubled hearts.
- The first assurance is that when Jesus departs to the Father His works will continue on earth (vs. 12-14).

- Jesus leaving was not the end, those who believe in Him would carry on His work in the world. They were not to disband after His departure, but to carry on the work to even greater magnitude.
- “Whatever you ask in My name, that I will do” (vs. 13) - Jesus further explained how greater works would be possible for His followers. It would be possible because Jesus would do His work through His prayerful people, who asked and acted in His name.
- To ask in His name means in unity with His will, thoughts, and desires.
- The second assurance is that when Jesus departs, He will send the Holy Spirit (vs. 15-17).
- Before going into that, Jesus says some significant things in verse 15 where He relates loving Him with keeping His commandments.
- Obedience is a fair measure of our love for Him. Our culture often sees love as an emotion or in sentimental terms. That type of love is important too, but love must also be connected with obedience to His commandments.
- If love shows itself in obedience, then disobedience would be a failure of love.
- Going back to the three assurances, the second assurance for their troubled hearts was the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity and He would abide in them and abides in us.
- The third assurance is that after He departed, Jesus would make Himself known to His disciples (vs. 18-21).
- Jesus would not leave them as orphans but would come to them (vs. 18).
- “I will come to you” (vs. 18) - Jesus again promised to come to the disciples (previously in John 14:3).
- Over and over Jesus is restating that they would not be alone after He departs.
- Through the Holy Spirit they would have a life-giving relationship, shared life, and union with Him (“I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.” vs. 20).
- Then back to the previous theme of obedience in verse 21. “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me.”
- In response to another question Jesus affirms again the importance of obedience.
- “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word” (vs. 23).
- Jesus would be revealed to and among the disciples through love, obedience, and union with the Father and the Son.
- In verses 25-27 Jesus gives another confirmation of the gift of the Holy Spirit and His peace.
- The chapter concludes with Jesus affirming the goodness of His departure to the Father (vs. 28-29) and that Satan was coming (vs. 30) but has no hold on Jesus because Jesus was going willingly to the cross showing His love for the Father (vs. 31).
- At this point, Jesus and His disciples left the table and made their way to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus would spend the night in prayer before being arrested and crucified.

Part Three: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

1. Open in Prayer

2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

3. Discussion Questions

- How does the thought of heaven bring you hope and peace?
- How does believing in Jesus give us peace as we face the storms of life?
- Describe how Jesus is each of these three things: “way”, “truth” and “life”?
- Considering verse 6, how would you respond to someone who says, “There are many ways to God”?

4. Sharing

- Share something from the study notes and the personal bible study that stood out to you and why.

5. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
 - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
 - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

6. Prayer

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province and nation.

Session Six: I AM the True Vine

Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

2. Read: John 15:1-17 and the Session 6 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

3. Questions to Consider

- This passage revolves around three symbols – the vine, the gardener, and the branches. What is Jesus trying to communicate using these examples?
- Verse 4: Jesus doesn't command His disciples to bear fruit, rather the command is to "Abide/Remain in me." That is the significance of that statement?
- What is the significance of the gardener cutting off branches that bear no fruit and pruning branches that do bear fruit?
- Verses 14-17: What are the requirements and benefits of friendship with Jesus?

4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this material into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

6. Prayer

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

7. Optional: Pick a verse(s) from this week's Bible passage and memorize it.

Part Two: I AM the True Vine Study Notes

- As Jesus prepared His disciples for life without Him, He impressed on them the importance of staying close to Him spiritually. The theme of this passage is “Abide/Remain in Me” (vs. 5).
- This passage revolves around three symbols – the vine, the gardener and the branches.
- “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener” (vs. 1).
- Of the many pictures of the relationship between God and His people, the vine and branch picture emphasize complete dependence and the need for constant connection.
- The Gardener will “cut off every branch that bears no fruit” (vs. 2).
- Branches that are not abiding in the vine will not bear fruit and will be cut away by the gardener.
- “Every branch that does bear fruit is pruned so that it will bear even more fruit (vs. 2).
- The gardener prunes or cleans up the vine so that it will bear more fruit. The Greek word for pruning could also be used for cleansing.
- Jesus then tells the disciples that they are already clean because of the word He has spoken to them (vs. 3).
- For the past three years the disciples had been walking closely with Jesus. They had heard and received His teaching and therefore were already clean.
- The word of God is a cleansing agent that reveals sin and inspires holiness.
- Verses 4-5 speak of the vital relationship between the branch and the vine.
- “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” (vs. 5).
- The abiding that grows fruit is one of a mutual relationship. The disciples abide in Jesus and Jesus abides in the disciples.
- This provided the disciples with a clear picture of continued connection and relationship with Him even though He was about to depart from them.
- Yet He also spoke in a way that indicated that this abiding relationship was a choice on their part.
- They must choose to abide in Him, they must choose to keep contact with Him.
- It is impossible for the branch to bear fruit if it isn’t connected to the vine (vs. 6). The disciples cannot do true good things for God and His Kingdom if they are not consciously connected with and abiding in Jesus.
- Fruit bearing is the natural result of abiding in Jesus.
- “If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned” (vs. 6).
- Jesus warned His disciples of failing to abide. A branch only has life as it is connected to the vine.
- Like other parables, the picture Jesus used here was not meant to describe a whole theological system. Yet the progression described is a warning of the danger of not abiding.
- The branch that bears no fruit is good for nothing but burning. This reference warns of the consequences of not abiding.
- The emphasis continues to be that true disciples abide and produce fruit.
- Verse 7: “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”
- The abiding connection is made through the Word, prayer and obedience.
- This faithful, abiding disciple should expect answered prayer as part of their relationship with Jesus.

- Unanswered prayers could potentially mean something is not right in the asking and there is a lack of clarity of what Jesus wants to do in and through His disciple.
- Verse 8: “This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.
- The purpose of fruit bearing is to bring glory to God, not to the disciple.
- Verse 9-11 speaks of the link between love and obedience.
- Jesus deliberately loved His disciples according to the way God the Father loved Him (vs. 9).
- “Abide in my love” (vs. 9). When the disciple stays connected to the love of Jesus the relationship stays strong.
- “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love” (vs. 10).
- Again, Jesus connects discipleship with obedience and relates that to love.
- The fruit of this is joy (vs. 11).
- If there is a failure of abiding, or failure of obedience, there will be a lack of true spiritual joy.
- Spiritual joy is not the same as happiness but rather the exhilaration of being right with God, experiencing walking with Him.
- Verses 12-15 speak of the love that they are to imitate.
- “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (vs. 12-13).
- The love that the disciples had for each other was to be according to the measure and quality of love that Jesus had for the disciples.
- Jesus loved so deeply that He gave His life for them, the proof of His love they would see in just a few short hours.
- Jesus called them His friends (vs. 15), which was quite a statement in Old Testament times as the relationship between rabbi and disciples wasn’t expected to be friendship.
- Friendship with Jesus is offered to all people, but it comes with obedience (vs. 14).
- Verses 16-17 conclude with the reminder to bear fruit and to love each other.

Part Three: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

1. Open in Prayer

2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

3. Discussion Questions

- The word abide occurs eleven times in John 15:1-17. What does it mean to abide in Christ? What does it look like practically?
- Why is it sometimes hard to abide in Christ? What in our culture pushes us away abiding in Christ?
- What does this passage point to as the fruit of abiding?
- So how can we actually measure whether or not we're abiding in Christ?
- What is the condition to be met first before you "ask whatever you wish"?

4. Sharing

- Share something from the study notes and the personal bible study that stood out to you and why.

5. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
 - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
 - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

6. Prayer

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province and nation.

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