

HEADLINES

# JESUS

THE I AM, THE BREAD OF LIFE, THE LIGHT OF THE  
WORLD, THE GATE, THE GOOD SHEPHERD, THE WAY,  
THE TRUTH, THE LIFE, THE VINE



Teacher  
Challenges  
Pharisees

LUNATIC

HERETIC  
IN DAMASCUS

Some say  
Jesus is  
a liar

Man Claims,  
"HE IS GOD"

STUDY GUIDE



# CONTENTS

CLICK BELOW TO JUMP TO PAGE

<u>Introduction</u>	<u>3</u>
 <b><u>Week 1</u></b>	
<u>Two Powerful Words</u>	<u>5</u>
 <b><u>Week 2</u></b>	
<u>I am the Bread of Life</u>	<u>9</u>
 <b><u>Week 3</u></b>	
<u>I am the Gate &amp; Good Shepherd</u>	<u>13</u>
 <b><u>Week 4</u></b>	
<u>I am the Way, Truth, &amp; Life</u>	<u>17</u>
 <b><u>Week 5</u></b>	
<u>I am the Vine</u>	<u>21</u>
 <b><u>Good Friday</u></b>	
<u>What is good about Good Friday?</u>	<u>25</u>
 <b><u>Week 6 / Easter</u></b>	
<u>I am the Resurrection &amp; the Life</u>	<u>27</u>

# INTRODUCTION

Who is Jesus? That question has been a question for centuries. John the baptizer even said, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" (Matt. 11:3). Islam says Jesus is a prophet. Jehovah's Witnesses say Jesus is a mighty being, even a god, but not God.

For us to answer the question, "Who is Jesus?," we must consider what Jesus Himself said. So, who did Jesus Himself say He was? People asked Jesus, "Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?" (John 8:48).

People knew there was something different about Jesus. Yet, many people didn't understand who He was. They asked Jesus, "Who do you think you are?" (John 8:53). Jesus said, "Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I AM!" (John 8:58)

Wow. What does that even mean? Jehovah's Witnesses wrongly translate this verse to say, "I have been" because they do not believe Jesus is God. They do not believe in the Trinity.

The people listening to Jesus, however, knew what Jesus meant. They clearly knew that He was claiming to be part of the Divine Identity. Therefore, "they picked up stones to stone Him" (John 8:59) for what they heard as heresy.

The people wanted to stone Jesus because He was claiming to be one with the LORD God. When Jesus says, "I AM," as He did elsewhere (John 8:24, 28, 58; 18:5-6), He is linking back to Exodus 3:14. In Exodus 3:14, God reveals who He is to Moses by saying, "I AM Who I AM." Thus, when Jesus says, "I AM," He is clearly identifying Himself with the Divine Identity.

So, who is Jesus? Is He the Lord of the universe? Is He the second member of the Trinity (Matthew 28:19; John 20:28; Colossians 2:9; Philippians 2:5-8)? Is He the One who became flesh (John 1:14) and became sin (2 Corinthians 5:21) to take away sin (John 1:29)? Is Jesus able to be the way to God (John 14:6), able to be the resurrection and the life (John 11:25) because of who He is? Who Jesus is, the type of being He is, and His existential nature matter deeply.

Who is Jesus? That is the all-important question we will be considering.

# **HEADLINES**

**THE "I AM" STATEMENTS OF JESUS**

# WEEK 1: TWO POWERFUL WORDS

## JOHN CHAPTERS 1 & 8

If someone asked you who Jesus is, what would you say? Jesus is described as the Word, Creator, life, light, overcomer, Savior, Son, and Christ. He is also described as One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit, the Lamb of God, the Messiah, the King of Israel, and the Son of Man. And while all of these names are accurate, the name that stands out the most is, "I AM." There were men who sought to kill Jesus on the spot for claiming that holy name of God.

This week we will unpack the significance of that Name as well as Jesus being the light. It is not head knowledge we seek, but a heart that understands and treasures the precious names associated with Jesus. We want to experience the goodness of Jesus. As Psalm 34:8 says, we want to taste and see that the LORD is good; we want to know that blessed is the person who takes refuge in Him!

Jesus says and shows Himself to be "the light of the world" (John 8:12). When Jesus says He is "the light of the world," He is claiming to be the promised Messiah. Isaiah 9:2 says,

"The people who walked in darkness  
Have seen a great light;  
Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,  
On them has light shone."

Jesus is the light. He is the one that keeps people from deep darkness. The person that walks in darkness doesn't know where they are going (John 12:35-36) but Jesus, as the light, shows the way.

The contrast between light and darkness is powerful. In darkness, cold and confusion reign. In darkness, life does not flourish; it wilts and dies.

Light provides clarity and comfort. Light is life-sustaining. By it we live; without it, we die.

Notice that Jesus' claim to be the light does not minimize the dark realities of life. The Bible is honest about the difficulties of life. The Bible recognizes that the world is often a dark and difficult place. The Bible is not blindly optimistic.



Yet, neither is the Bible hopelessly pessimistic. Amid the darkness, a light shone. And the light welcomes those in darkness. And the light shows the way.

The fact that Jesus is the light of the world is illustrated in John 8:1-11. It was the early morning (v. 2), but Jesus is the one who brought light. Jesus gives understanding to the scribes and the Pharisees. They see that they, too, are sinners. Jesus, the light, reveals their sin. And the woman caught in adultery sees the light of hope and grace.

It is striking to me that at the beginning of John 8, people are picking up stones, and at the end of the chapter, people are picking up stones. In the beginning, the stones are for a sinner, and at the end, they are for the Sinless One who will be slain for sinners. Jesus did not condemn the woman but is Himself condemned. The light is extinguished but sets the whole world aflame. We, as Christians, reflect Jesus when we tell the world about Him and love as He loves.

## **PRAYER FOR THE WEEK**

Father, we know that it is in Your light that we see light (Psalm 36:9). So, as we read Your word may You give us light by Your Spirit and may we see Jesus who is the light of the whole world. Please teach us about Your character and Your love for Your people. Please teach us to honor You and Your name, the name You said is Yours forever, to be remembered throughout all generations. And as we do this, may You help us to be the light that You have called us to be. We ask this all in Jesus' name. Amen.

## **BIBLE VERSES FOR THE WEEK**

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." - John 8:12

"Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." - John 8:58

# DAILY STUDY

○ **DAY 1** (Read Exodus 3:1-15)

- Why did God command Moses to take off his sandals? What made that place holy? Is God just as holy today?
- How did God reassure Moses?
- When Moses asked who should I tell them has sent me, how did God respond? Who gave God the name I AM?
- How does God identify Himself in terms of the past? The present? The future?

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○ **DAY 2** (Read Isaiah 9:2-7; 42:6)

- Have you ever lost electricity in your house or been out in the woods at night without a flashlight? Where is the darkest place you have been? What did you feel?
- What was it like when the electricity came back on in your house or you got to a flashlight? What did you feel? What were you thankful for?
- In the passages you read, what encourages you about the promise of light? In what ways is it encouraging to think that the LORD will continue to be our light (Isaiah 60:20; Micah 7:8; Psalm 84:11; Revelation 21:23)?

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○ **DAY 3** (Read John 1:1-18)

- What does John the baptizer say about the light?
- What are two of the names given for Jesus in the passage that you read? Why do you think Jesus is referred to in this way?

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○ **DAY 4** (Read John 7:53-8:59)

- What does Jesus promise those who follow Him (v. 12)? What difference has following Jesus had in your life? Where would you be now and what would you be doing if it weren't for Jesus?
- What is the connection between Jesus being the "light of the world" (John 8:12) and knowing the truth and being set free (John 8:31-32)?
- In verse 58, Jesus referred to Himself as I AM. Why do you think the Jews intended to stone Him for these words? What is the significance of Jesus saying that?

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○ **DAY 5** (Read Isaiah 49:6; Matthew 5:14-16; John 3:19-21; 12:46)

- Why don't people like the light?
- What is an area of life where you need the light of the Lord to shine?
- What does it mean for Christians to be "a light for the nations"?

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## WEEK 2: I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE

### JOHN 6:22-59

John sets the stage for this passage, letting us know that “the time of the Passover was at hand” (John 6:4). The Passover celebration was a time of great anticipation for the Jewish people. They longed for a greater Moses to come and deliver the people, just as Moses did when he inaugurated the first Passover celebration. Jesus has already miraculously multiplied the fish and the loaves (John 6:1-15) and walked on the water (John 6:16-21). Both of these harken back to the Exodus – God’s provision in the wilderness wandering, and Moses’ control over the waters by splitting the Red Sea. All of which led many of the people to be in awe and wonder over Jesus, considering Him to be “the Prophet” that was to come (John 6:14) and some even wanted to make Him king (John 6:15)!

But, Jesus knew what was in man (John 2:24-25). He knew the amazement of the people was arising from the wrong stomach! Very poignantly, He calls them out, putting a magnifying glass on the consistent issue with God’s people from Moses’ time to the present. Jesus shows them that their hearts weren’t right. They ate their fill physically but were not seeking Jesus spiritually. The two stomachs. How tempting it is to reduce Jesus to what He can do for us and our physical stomach! When in reality, Jesus reminds them that in the end that stomach will ultimately die (John 6:49). Jesus knows we’re in need of completely different bread! Bread that doesn’t just sustain the physical life for a period of time, but that which brings new life and sustains for eternity (John 6:35-40).

So, how do we satisfy our spiritual stomach? Jesus. He compares Himself with the manna of their forefathers. He is the bread that has also come down from heaven (John 6:38). He satisfies the spiritual longing we all have. He alone can meet our deepest cravings! What’s more, there’s no work to do for it; He has come to us!

But how do we satisfy our spiritual hunger in Jesus? “Whoever comes to Me” and “whoever believes in Me.” “Everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” Come. Look. Believe. Seek Him in faith. Set the gaze of your heart and the appetite of your stomach upon Him. No good deeds and no works of the Old Testament Law will do, but simple, sustained trust in Jesus leads to life abundant and satiation of our inner hunger and thirst. Forever!

## **PRAYER FOR THE WEEK**

Father, thank You for revealing Your will, which is to believe in Your Son, Jesus! Forgive me for the times and seasons I don't seek, look, or believe in Him. I want the bread of life to sustain and satisfy me. By the power of Your Spirit, lead, guide, and direct me unto the ways of life and the way of Jesus, my daily bread. In Jesus' name. Amen

## **BIBLE VERSE FOR THE WEEK**

"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.'" - John 6:35

# DAILY STUDY

○ **DAY 1** (Read Isaiah 55:1-5)

- What similarities do you see between John 6:22-59 and the prophecy in Isaiah?
- What do the similarities say about Jesus' identity and relationship with the Father?
- For you personally, what are those things that you buy that aren't bread (Isaiah 55:2a) and labor for that do not satisfy (Isaiah 55:2b)? Pray that you can lay those at the feet of Jesus in order to be satisfied by Him!

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○ **DAY 2** (Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-13)

- Why does 1 Corinthians 10 bring up the history of God's provision and discipline of the ancient Israelites?
- One of the points is that knowledge or covenant blessing isn't enough. It's not enough to know that Jesus is the bread of life, but to walk in that truth. Just as 1 Corinthians says that what happened with the Israelites was written down for our instruction, can you think of times in your own life that would be instructive for your current walk with Christ?

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○ **DAY 3** (Read Deuteronomy 8:1-3)

- How does this passage highlight the main point of Jesus', "I AM the bread of life" statement in John 6?
- How should we understand this passage in Deuteronomy in light of this passage? (Specifically, the end of verse 3?)
- What does it look like in your life to "live by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD?"

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○ **DAY 4** (Read John 6:60-63)

- What is Jesus' point in this passage?
- What does He mean by "the flesh is no help at all"? How does this help us seek Him and seek to understand His words?

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○ **DAY 5** (Read Galatians 2:15-21)

- How does Paul (and Jesus) respond to the crowd's question in John 6:28, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?"
- Do you struggle to seek to be justified by God through your own works?
- How does Paul answer this? (Read Galatians 3:2-3)

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## **WEEK 3: I AM THE DOOR & GOOD SHEPHERD**

### **JOHN 10:7-18**

When one flips through the pages of the Bible, it doesn't take long to realize that God is metaphorically depicted as a shepherd. Shepherds, specifically Middle Eastern shepherds of the ancient Near East, lived out their duties in ways that reflected God's disposition and actions toward His people. This was a common thought among the Jewish people. Some may recall Psalm 23 in which King David refers to the Lord as his shepherd, or possibly Ezekiel 34 in which the LORD declares that He Himself would seek out His sheep.

It wouldn't be but a few hundred years after God's declaration through the prophet Ezekiel that God would physically come to earth and fulfill this promise. Jesus, God in flesh, is the Good Shepherd who came to save the lost sheep and bring them home. This is the point that Jesus overtly states in this passage using the "I AM" formula. Those whom He had addressed knew that when Jesus claimed to be the door and the Good Shepherd, He was talking about much more than sheep. He was claiming to be God!

### **PRAYER FOR THE WEEK**

Father, You have long promised to gather Your flock, and You have been so faithful to fulfill Your promise in Your Son, Jesus Christ. He is the door by which I am saved and the Good Shepherd who has gathered me into the flock of God. I am thankful that You are who You say You are, and I am thankful that You sought me out when I had gone astray. Help me, Good Shepherd, not to wander from Your fold. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

### **BIBLE VERSE FOR THE WEEK**

"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture." - John 10:9

# DAILY STUDY

## ○ DAY 1 (Read John 10:7-9)

- The sheepfold was a large enclosure with a stone wall that offered the flock safety and security from wild animals and people with ill intent. There was only one door to enter and exit the safety of the fold. At the door, the shepherd would stand to protect and secure the sheep in the fold. Jesus states that He alone is this door to salvation. Do you truly believe that Jesus is the only door to salvation? Have you made for yourself any other perceived doors in your life?
- Shepherds in the ancient Near East had unique whistles, calls, and songs that they would use to call their sheep. The sheep would hear these tunes and follow their shepherd. The sheep were not under compulsion but knew their shepherd would care for them. Occasionally, there would be multiple flocks and shepherds working in the same area, even the same fold, but the sheep would distinguish their shepherd's unique call from all the noise and other tunes. The sheep would not listen to any call or follow any shepherd that was not their own. In your life, are you listening for Jesus' song and following Him as a sheep in His flock? If so, what does that look like? Are there other shepherds in your life (thieves and robbers) that sing tunes to distract you?

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○ **DAY 2** (Read Jeremiah 31:10)

- This passage from Jeremiah tells of how the Lord, as the Good Shepherd, will gather Israel after they have been dispersed over great distances. God carefully gathers His sheep from near and far to keep them under His loving watch. He tends His flock and secures them as His own. When His sheep wander astray, away from the pasture, the Lord graciously led them home. Take some time to reflect on how the Lord has sought you out to bring you home. What changes have you noticed in your life since God gathered you into His flock?

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○ **DAY 3** (Read Psalm 23)

- King David, the author of Psalm 23, knew God as his personal shepherd. God had provided David with all he needed. He brought David peace and comfort in difficult times under impossible circumstances. He provided restoration for David's beaten and battered soul. Notice that in this Psalm, David barely hints at his own circumstances. His focus is on the Shepherd, his hope lay with the Shepherd, his trust is in the Shepherd. Some of us have experienced unspeakable hardship. Does your focus tend to be on the Shepherd or your affliction? What steps might you take to trust the Shepherd when the wolves are at the gate?

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○ **DAY 4** (Read Ezekiel 34:11-16)

- God says that He will seek out His flock from wherever they are scattered and bring them out of the darkest places. In His mercy, He gathers His flock and provides for their every need. Whether they are hungry, sick, injured, or weak, He says that He will bring restoration to the broken places in their life. No matter where the lost sheep have been or how far they have wandered, God gathers them in and brings them back to safety. How have you seen God's provision in your life? How has He provided for you when you had no other way?

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○ **DAY 5** (Read John 10:11)

- A shepherd would seldom need to lay down his life for the flock, but it was their duty to defend their sheep (1 Samuel 17:34-37). If the shepherd was killed defending his sheep, the sheep would be defenseless. In the shepherd's absence, the flock may be ravaged by predators, thieves, and robbers, and of course the shepherd would be dead. It was a bad deal for the sheep and the shepherd. Jesus, on the other hand, is not simply a shepherd, He is the Good Shepherd. His statement declared His true identity as God, which had been revealed many times in scripture, while foretelling the events of the cross. How is Jesus giving His life for His sheep similar and different than the earthly shepherd dying for his sheep?
- As was his duty, a mortal shepherd would lay down his life with potentially disastrous results for the flock. In contrast, the Good Shepherd personally laid down His life with salvific, life-giving results for His flock. How will you express your gratitude to God for the love and care with which He shepherds you?

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## WEEK 4: I AM THE WAY, TRUTH, & LIFE

### JOHN 14:1-7

The bookends of John 14 are Jesus saying, "let not your hearts be troubled" (John. 14:1, 27). But why? What could keep our hearts from being troubled in a world that is so troubling?

Jesus may say, "don't be troubled," but the world and our own hearts and voices, often shout, "trouble, trouble, trouble!" What can help us obey Jesus' admonition? To answer this question, we need to hear what Jesus says in between His bookend exhortations.

Jesus says that He is the way, the truth, and the life. No one goes to the Father except through Him (John 14:6). Then, later on, Jesus makes a promise. He says He will not leave us as orphans (John 14:18). He says He will give the Helper, the Holy Spirit, to be with us (John 14:16-17). And that's just what He has done. One of the reasons we don't need to hear the voices that shout "trouble!" is because we have the Comforter with us.

A child is reassured and comforted by the presence of their loving parent when they're afraid of the dark. That's us with the Holy Spirit. He is with us and will comfort us no matter what we face.

Second, Jesus is the way. Since the fall of humans in Eden and the expulsion from the Garden, people have sought a way back into God's presence. God graciously provided access through various means. In the Old Testament, priests gained access to the Holy of Holies through sacrifices. There was a way to God, but it was distantly mediated by a priest. The high priest, and he alone, would enter the most holy place only once a year (Hebrews 9:7).

Jesus amazingly provides ready access to God and is Himself God! Jesus shows us how God loves with flesh on (John 1:14). And Jesus gives entrance into an eternal home of love (John 14:2-3). Jesus, and Jesus alone, is the way. He alone brings salvation (Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5). There is no way to the Father except through Him. There is no other key that opens the passageway to everlasting peace. Since we have Him and the peace He gives, we don't need to be troubled.

Third, Jesus is the truth. Jesus not only speaks the truth. He is the truth in flesh. He is truth lived out to the fullest...

So, what is truth? That's the question Pilate asked before Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus' answer had already been given. Jesus had already shown Himself to be, and said He is, the truth. Jesus corresponds with reality. He is real. He is what it means to live. He is what it means to love.

If something is true, then it corresponds with reality. That is, if something is true then it is real, actual, or the way things are.

When we follow the truth, we don't have to be troubled, because though the world may say we're wrong and things don't seem to be going well, we'll be redeemed and shown to be right in the end.

Lastly, Jesus is the life. Jesus is the life in so many ways. If we have Jesus, even if our life is taken, we don't need to be troubled because we have eternal and abundant life. In fact, real life, real living, is all about knowing God through Jesus (John 17:3). Jesus says, "whoever would save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?" (Mark 8:35-36).

We serve the One who gave His life to give us life. So, even if we ultimately lose everything and lose our life, we still win. Look at what Romans 8:32 says, "He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?" If God has gone to such great lengths to give us life, we don't need to be troubled! He will continue to prove Himself good.

## **PRAYER FOR THE WEEK**

Father, we thank You for Jesus who provides a way for us to be in relationship with You. As we face trouble and tests this week, let not our hearts be troubled. Instead, help us trust in You and believe Your truth. We, in Jesus' victory, are victorious! Help us to walk in that victory. As we do, may we be comforted. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

## **BIBLE VERSE FOR THE WEEK**

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" - John 14:6

# DAILY STUDY

☐ **DAY 1** (Read John 14:1-7; Acts 4:12)

- What reason does Jesus give for why we shouldn't let our hearts be troubled?
- What do you think of Jesus being the only way to having a right relationship with God?

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☐ **DAY 2** (Read John 14:1-7)

- What are some different views about who Jesus is? How do those views line up with what Jesus said about Himself?
- What does it mean that Jesus is the Way? And what could be better than to have the One who is the Way, to show us the way?

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☐ **DAY 3** (Read Psalm 16:11; John 4:14; 5:40; 7:40; Matthew 11:28)

- What do these passages all have in common?
- What does it mean that Jesus is "the life"?

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○ **DAY 4** (Read John 17:3; 1 John 5:20; Revelation 3:7)

- What does it mean when something is true?
- What does it mean that Jesus is true?
- Are you personally living as though Jesus is true?

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○ **DAY 5** (Read Ephesians 2:13-19; Hebrews 10:19-25)

- How is Jesus the way? How has He made a way for us to go to God?
- Do you confidently revel in your relationship with the LORD God, or do you feel shame and doubt? Why or why not?

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## WEEK 5: I AM THE VINE

### JOHN 15:1-9

In one of the most vivid and familiar metaphors in John, Jesus teaches a startling concept. If we've grown up in Church, or are familiar with this teaching, it can be easy to breeze pass the shocking nature of this passage. Jesus, fully human, is comparing Himself to a vine that every true disciple must be intimately connected with in order to experience life, joy, and fruitfulness. The disciples had to be wondering, "How do I abide in another human being?" How can a man, even if He is the Messiah, command another to abide in Him? As we've seen throughout the other weeks, the "other-worldliness" of Jesus is on full display. He must be more than human. In order to be connected intimately to every branch, He must be God.

Jesus, in bringing in the New Covenant is showing that according to the coming Kingdom, obedience to the Old Testament Law (or any law) is not required for discipleship! This would have been foreign to them and it is a struggle for us as well. Rather, at the crux of this new era is intimate, intentional, and continuous relationship with Jesus Himself. He is the source of our strength and our abilities. Speaking in terms of our growth in the Christian life, we can do nothing apart from Him. Read that again. Without our life-giving attachment to Christ, we will wither up and die, being useful for nothing else than firewood.

So, how do we abide in Christ? We allow His words to remain in us (v. 7). This doesn't mean they simply occupy brain space, but persist or endure in and through us to deeply impact our life and actions. Jesus follows this up with a call to remain steadfast in His love (v. 10). What is the ongoing result of seeking Jesus through prayer, His word, and His love? Joy. An overwhelming experience of gladness. One that surpasses anything else in this life. One that will reverberate into eternity. One that replenishes and sustains us. Are you abiding in Jesus? Or are you trying to do this life in your own strength? Are His words living and changing you? Or are you trying to live by your own authority? Are you filled with joy? Or is the pain, suffering, and chaos of the world too overwhelming? I encourage you to meditate on this passage, seeking to maintain or re-engage your vine, the vine, Jesus Christ our Lord!

## **PRAYER FOR THE WEEK**

Lord, I need You, I confess that I often try to do life on my own, apart from the vine. But I know that You, Jesus, are my joy. Help me to remain in Your love, allow Your words to take up residence in my heart and help me to do Your will! I ask this in Your powerful name, Jesus. Amen.

## **BIBLE VERSE FOR THE WEEK**

"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." - John 15:5



# DAILY STUDY

○ **DAY 1** (Read 1 John 2:4-6)

- With similar verbiage of John 15, the apostle John writes this passage. What are two markers, according to John, of a disciple who knows God?
- Would you say that you keep Jesus’ words or not? If so, how? If not, what is the most difficult for you?

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○ **DAY 2** (Read Romans 8:1-2)

- Being “in Christ Jesus” for Paul is similar to “abiding in Jesus” for John. What good news is there for those “in Christ” described in these verses?
- What have we been set free from because of Jesus? How should this impact how we seek to live our life for Christ?

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○ **DAY 3** (Read Philippians 2:12-13)

- It's clear that Paul doesn't want any Christians on the sidelines. What does it mean to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling?"
- Normally, we don't read v. 13 when we encourage people to work out their salvation. But, what is the promise here? How does it relate to Jesus' statement in John 15:5?

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○ **DAY 4** (Read Galatians 5:16-18)

- How do you see "walking in the Spirit" as similar or different to abiding in Jesus?
- Why do you think Paul would say that we are not under any law when we're led by the Spirit?

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○ **DAY 5** (Read 2 Timothy 2:11-13)

- What does this passage say about remaining or abiding in Jesus?
- How can verse 13 be an encouragement when we are found not abiding in Jesus?

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# WHAT IS GOOD ABOUT GOOD FRIDAY?

What is so good about Good Friday? Jesus was crucified on a Friday. Good Friday is the day we remember Jesus' death. It almost seems sick to call Good Friday good. If you have a loved one that died, you do not celebrate the anniversary of that person's death as good; it was tragic. Why then, when referring to the anniversary of Jesus' death, do we call it good? That almost seems sacrilegious.

We call it Good Friday because it is good. We celebrate all that Jesus' death accomplished. No, we do not celebrate His death per se. We celebrate that though He died, and died a terrible death, He said, "It is finished," and it is. We remember and celebrate because He rose victorious over sin and death.

Jesus laid down His life to be the wrath-absorbing sacrifice for us, and He rose victorious. That is why the anniversary of Jesus' death can be said to be good. Actually, in some sense, because Jesus died and conquered death and sin, the anniversary of our loved one's death who knew Jesus can now be thought of with joy.

I want to encourage you to meditate on what Jesus did for you. Think about the cross where Jesus bore the wrath of God that we deserved. I encourage you to read the narrative accounts in the Gospels; when you read them, remember who is being mocked, flogged, and crucified. Remember why He suffered in that way and felt the wrath of God.

Amazingly, Isaiah 52:13-53:12 was written around 700 years before Jesus was born. I encourage you to read that powerful passage and see how precisely it describes the events of the crucifixion and the reason for the crucifixion. Jesus was crushed for our sins (Isaiah 53:5) and thus makes many to be accounted righteous (Isaiah 53:11).

Bound by sin's darkened glow,  
in this world of pain and woe,  
helpless, hopeless to us He came,  
and in the midst was slain.

*Darkest night, the Light extinguished.*

*Will we forever captives be?*

*Messiah's mission ends in death?*

*Where's the hope of life and peace?*

*But by power He awaketh,*

*all of death He did breaketh.*

*By His death, Death's defeated.*

*Sin's depleted of its power.*

*Thus, the hour of unrest*

*has become our hope, our joy, our rest.*

*For in Christ's death,*

*Death's defeated!*

*Yes, He burst the bonds that bound Him*

*and leads many captives in His wake.*

*Yes, from the cross He is victorious,*

*and all of heaven hails, "He's glorious!"*

Good Friday is good because God is good, and He sent Jesus to the broken world in love, to be broken, to fix the broken world. So, on Good Friday, we remember and celebrate the goodness of God shown to us in Jesus.

# WEEK 6: I AM THE RESURRECTION & THE LIFE

## JOHN 11

In John 11, Jesus hears about the death of His friend, Lazarus, from Lazarus' two sisters. When Jesus hears about His friend's death, He doesn't say, "I'm sorry about your loss." Jesus weeps. He weeps greatly.

Yet, we know Jesus doesn't just weep. He doesn't just sorrow over humanity's sad situation. Jesus is not inept in the face of death. Jesus shows us this by raising Lazarus from the dead.

Jesus has power over death because of who He is. Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life. It's not just that Jesus has the power to bring people back to life; He is Life. It's not just that He can resurrect people; He is Resurrection.

There is a scientific principle called entropy, which states that all things tend toward disorder. Like a campfire, the wood burns and becomes ash that can no longer burn. Energy burns up, and people grow old and die. Eventually, the "big freeze" will set in where there will be an equilibrium of entropy. There will be no energy, no life; it will all be burned up. That's our future. That's the future of everything. That is, unless... Unless Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life.

Entropy is not the end. There is another higher reality in the world: Jesus. He is the Resurrection. He is the revival of life. Jesus proved Himself to be the Resurrection not only by raising Lazarus but by Himself raising from the dead. Jesus "was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4).

The resurrection of Jesus is the hinge on which Christianity hangs. If Jesus didn't really rise, then our faith falls. If Jesus didn't rise, then as the Apostle Paul said, our faith is pointless (1 Corinthians 15:17). Yet, Jesus did rise, and He showed Himself to be physically alive through many proofs (Acts 1:3).

The resurrection of Jesus is the first fruits (1 Corinthians 15:20). Because Jesus is the Resurrection, resurrection is not a one-time happening; resurrection is the beginning of a new age. The world is not tilted towards death and decay. In Jesus, life has burst upon the scene!

The resurrection of Jesus is not a last-ditch effort, it is death being “swallowed up in victory” (1 Corinthians 15:54). Jesus’ resurrection is an overwhelming force. It is a hurricane wave that will eventually cover the whole earth. Easter means entropy ends, and Jesus, the Life, reigns.

The resurrection not only points to new life but also points to the coming new creation. It tells us that the material world is not inherently bad, it’s inherently good, and God will soon remake it!

Our minds are calibrated to limitation. Jesus, the Resurrection, recalibrates us to life and superabundance. In the new creation, it is not just that we will not die, but we will have superabundant life. What we knew as life before will hardly be recognizable as life, like a stick figure person compared to an actual person.

### **PRAYER FOR THE WEEK**

Father, we praise You that though we have rebelled against You, the Creator of all creation, You bring new creation. We thank You for sending Jesus. He is Hope, Life, and Resurrection. We confess that we trust You and believe in Your Son, Jesus. We confess, we believe, but help our unbelief (Mark 9:24). We want to be more in awe of You. We want our hearts and lives to be more aligned with Your love and the reality of the resurrection. Help us by Your Spirit, we pray, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

### **BIBLE VERSE FOR THE WEEK**

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live.’” - John 11:25

# DAILY STUDY

○ **DAY 1** (Read Job 19:25-26; Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2)

- When Job 19:25-26 refers to the resurrection, does it refer to merely a spiritual resurrection or is it a physical resurrection as well?
- Based on Daniel 12:2, what are the two types of resurrection? Does this fit with what the New Testament teaches about the resurrection?

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○ **DAY 2** (Read John 11)

- Jesus “wept” (v. 35) and was “deeply moved” and “greatly troubled” by Lazarus’ death. Why do you think Jesus was so affected by Lazarus’ death?
- The religious leaders heard about Jesus performing many signs (v. 47) and yet sought to put Him to death (v. 53). Why did they want to see Jesus put to death?
- Jesus does not merely say that He can resurrect; He says, “I am the resurrection.” Why? And how does one have resurrection life? Where is it found?

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○ **DAY 3** (Read 1 Corinthians 15)

- What reasons are you given in 1 Corinthians 15 for why you can have “certainty concerning the things you have been taught” (Luke 1:4) regarding Jesus’ resurrection?
- In light of Death’s defeat, how should we live? Hint: look at 1 Corinthians 15:58.

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○ **DAY 4** (Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

- Christians grieve the loss of other Christian brothers and sisters. But we grieve in a different way than nonbelievers. How do Christians grieve differently and why do they grieve differently?
- In what ways is the sure hope of resurrection an encouragement to you?

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○ **DAY 5** (Read 1 Peter 1:3-12)

- What kind of hope do Christians have? What are the words used to describe the inheritance that Christians have, and what do they convey?
- What kind of world do we live in? The resurrection of Jesus, and the fact that He is the Resurrection, should open new vistas to us. How has your understanding of the resurrection changed your perception of the world?
- Sing along to Phil Wickham’s song, “Living Hope.”

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