

# I AM

## THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE

### DATE

September 19 & 20

### WEEK

6 of 7

### OVERVIEW

John 14: 1-7

### KEY VERSE

John 14:6

## SETTING THE STAGE

The Gospel of John spends nine chapters on the last week of Jesus' life, including the resurrection; more than any other gospel. This last week began with Jesus visiting Mary, Martha, and the recently resurrected Lazarus for a dinner where Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with oil. And then there was the Triumphal Entry. People lining the streets, waiving palm branches, shouting "*Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord!*" It was a celebration like the disciples had never seen. A celebration fit for a king except for one minor detail; Jesus was riding a donkey instead of a stallion.

It was going to be quite a week for this group of thirteen. The disciples were there with Jesus each step of the way. Jesus was questioned and ridiculed by the religious authorities. Jesus cleansed the temple of the moneychangers. It was a long, draining, and challenging week leading up to the Passover.

The setting for this sixth *I Am* statement is a large furnished room upstairs where Jesus met for the last time with His 12 disciples. It was in this room that Jesus taught the group one last time around a table in which they would share their last meal, unbeknownst to the disciples.

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### LESSON OUTLINE

1. Transition and Trouble
2. Believe in Me
3. I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life
4. No One Comes to the Father Except Through Me

### THINGS TO KNOW

- The Gospel of John gives the most detailed information of what takes place in the Upper Room the night before Jesus was crucified.
- Jesus modeled what it means to finish strong as a leader.
- This *I Am* statement summarizes the major recurring themes in the Gospel of John.

# I AM

## THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE

*Setting the Stage, continued >*

It was in this room that Jesus washed the feet of Andrew, Peter, James, and John (the sons of thunder), Phillip, Nathaniel, Matthew, Thomas, James the lesser, Simon the Zealot, Judas Alpheus and the other Judas, Iscariot. Jesus, the Son of God, became their servant as He picked up the foot of each disciple that had traveled with Him for over three years pouring water and cleansing the dirt off each one and then drying it with a towel. One would betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. One would deny knowing Jesus three times before sunrise. All of them would scatter when Jesus was arrested, each running on the feet that had just been washed by their Savior. It was in this Upper Room that Jesus would speak words that were both haunting and comforting, yet all the while life-changing.

### Introduction

Times of transition can bring a troubled and anxious heart. Transition into uncharted territory can cause uncertainty, worry, stress, and doubt. But it does not have to be that way. In fact, one of the greatest privileges we have as Christians is that we can enter times of transition with confidence. We have a living hope. We are called to be people of assurance in the face of uncertainty. This was Jesus's command to His disciples and to us today.

### 1. TRANSITION AND TROUBLE

In John 14, Jesus' words about Himself provide confidence during uncertainty. Jesus brings stillness to a troubled heart. Jesus replaces anxiety with peace.

**JOHN 14:1** *"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me."*

If there was ever a time of transition and trouble in the disciples' life it was at this moment. They left everything to follow Jesus. They left the comforts of their home, their former identities as fishermen, a tax collector, and religious zealot all because they believed Jesus was worth following. They had set their hopes on Jesus that He would deliver them from Roman oppression and establish Himself as the Messiah for whom Israel had longed. They followed faithfully for three years, perhaps a little longer. But now the events that transpired this night would be burned into their hearts. They would never forget their Upper Room experience with Jesus.

It is in this moment that Jesus sees beyond the external circumstances and gazes into the inward reality of the disciples' hearts. He commands them, *"Do not let your heart be troubled."* (John 14:1) While the disciples are stunned and disillusioned by the external circumstances, Jesus' heartfelt words are sobering.

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The Greek word for ‘troubled’ is insightful. It is the word ‘*tarasso*.’ It means to be ‘disturbed or stirred up.’<sup>1</sup> Throughout the New Testament, this word is used mostly in a figurative way. For example, in John 5:7 the serene pool of Bethesda was ‘stirred up’ before the sick stepped in to be healed. This is a picture of what happens in our own hearts. Problems, worries, and anxieties are like giant boulders that plunge into a peaceful heart and cause it to be stirred up.

The word ‘troubled’ is in the passive voice in the Greek. This is incredibly helpful because there are troubling moments that occur in our lives that we cannot avoid, nor do we cause. The phone call from the doctor’s office with a bad report is troubling. The loss of a job is troubling. The death of a loved one is troubling. Financial difficulties are troubling. While we are not actively pursuing difficulties, we can still be passively troubled by our circumstances.

But Jesus commands His disciples to *“not let your hearts be troubled.”* He gives them a solution on how to fight their troubles. As believers in Christ, we triumph over our troubles with our trust in Him. He commands His disciples, *“believe in God; believe also in Me.”*

## 2. BELIEVE IN ME

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It should come as no surprise that “believe” is one of the most used words in the Gospel of John. In fact, John tells us his purpose in writing this gospel was so that people may “believe” (John 20:31). And here in this intimate setting of the Upper Room, Jesus is emphatically saying “believe” in the present tense, which means continuously, not wavering based on circumstances.

No matter what you may be facing during this season of life the key to navigating the troubles of life is to trust and believe God. One of the best ways we can place our trust in God in the face of our present troubles is to remind ourselves of our past deliverance. We can recall all that God has brought us through. His track record is impeccable. Perfect. Our trust and belief in God will turn our gaze from looking at the size of our problems to looking at the size of our God.

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Often, when life’s troubles come, we look inwardly and place our faith in the tangible such as ourselves and our accomplishments. We place our faith in our finances, but money cannot deliver us from sickness. We place our faith in our careers, but our notoriety and reputation in the office cannot resurrect a broken marriage. We place our faith in our sheer determination, but willpower cannot win back a wayward child. Only God can deliver us from our troubles. When we stop looking in and start looking up to God He can lead us in navigating life’s trials and troubles effectively. Throughout Scripture, we see the Character of God. Isaiah tells us that God has measured the waters in the hollow of His hands and has marked off the Heaven’s by the breadth of His hands (Isaiah 40:12). When we feel like life is falling apart, we can place our lives in the capable and loving hands of God. The same hands that marked off the span of the universe were pierced by nails for us.

In the Upper Room, Jesus makes God tangible. *“...believe in God, believe also in Me.”* Just a few verses later in that same setting, Jesus makes this statement, *“If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.”* (John 14:7) Jesus is connecting the dots for the disciples and for us. He knows that their circumstances are going to change drastically in less than 24 hours. He knows that the disciples are going to be troubled. Jesus knows that what they think is the end; is not the end. Jesus is preparing them for the place that He has prepared for them.

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<sup>1</sup> biblestudytools.com/lexicon

### 3. I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE

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As He talks with the disciples around the table in the Upper Room, Jesus continues to connect Himself to God the Father.

**JOHN 14:2-4** *“In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup> If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. <sup>4</sup> And you know the way where I am going.”*

It was after these words that Thomas asks the question that allowed Jesus to answer with the sixth *I Am* statement.

**JOHN 14:5** *Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?”*

Jesus gives four truths about Himself in response to Thomas. The first three truths help to relieve a troubled heart, but the last truth helps to relieve a troubled soul.

**JOHN 14:6** *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”*

#### A. The Way

About a month before our wedding, we got our first apartment. I moved all my stuff into the apartment while my wife stayed at her parents until the wedding day. I did not have much to bring or set-up. My whole life was easily packed into two trips with my Toyota Corolla. All I had to my name were some clothes (most of which are now donated to Goodwill or on the “you cannot wear that in public” list), a chair, a mattress, and some cleaning supplies. There was not much to pack or prepare, and it certainly was not comforting to view. But it was our first apartment, so I tried my hardest to make sure things looked welcoming when she arrived. I wanted the carpet to have those vacuumed lines running up and down the living room and for there not to be any dishes in the sink. That was easy, considering all I had were paper plates, plastic silverware from restaurants, and a coffee mug.

Jesus comforts His disciples, explaining that He is going to prepare a place for them in their Father’s house. In the ancient Near East when young men were betrothed to their bride, they did not go rent an apartment or buy a house. They built an addition on to their father’s house. They would make all the preparations necessary so that they could begin their life together in the new addition to the house. Once the groom was done making his preparations, the wedding and marriage would commence.

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To be clear, although Jesus was a carpenter, He is not in heaven with a golden hammer and nails building us mansions. Jesus prepared *the Way* for us to have life forever in the Father’s house through His work on the cross. He went to the Father by *the Way* of the cross. He not only shows us the way to the Father, but He also prepares the way to the Father through His sacrificial death and His resurrection.

When we look at our life’s troubles they pale in comparison to the outpouring of trouble that Jesus faced preparing the Way for us to the Father. He was beaten beyond recognition so that we could be recognized before the Father. He was mocked so that we may be adored. He was beaten so that we would be accepted. Jesus was cursed so that we could be blessed. He died so that we might live.

In the midst of life's troubles when we seem to have lost our way, we can look to Jesus. He prepared the Way for us to know the Father. The true trouble that Jesus faced brings us peace with God even in life's most dire circumstances.

## B. The Truth

One of the greatest modern actors in cinematic history is Daniel Day-Lewis. Day-Lewis has been nominated for over 200 acting awards and has won 139 times. What sets Daniel Day-Lewis apart from the rest of the actors is his commitment to get into, and stay in character – called method acting. In his 1997 film, *The Boxer*, Day-Lewis trained for 18 months preparing for the role. His trainer claimed that he was skilled enough to compete as a professional. In his 1992 role as Hawkeye in *Last of the Mohicans*, he became so immersed in his role that he learned to build canoes, fight with tomahawks, cook and skin animals, and to shoot a twelve-pound flintlock gun on the run. He even carried the weapon to his family's Christmas dinner. For his role in *My Left Foot*, Day-Lewis plays an Irish writer and painter with cerebral palsy. He spent eight weeks in a cerebral palsy clinic in Dublin and learned how to paint with his toes. He never left his wheelchair. He forced his fellow actors to carry him and insisted on being spoon-fed food. On Set during *Lincoln*, he demanded everyone call him Mr. President. He wrote letters to his fellow colleagues and signed them "Abe."<sup>2</sup>

Day-Lewis was so committed to being in character that the lines between the role and reality often blurred in his everyday life. He was committed to becoming somebody he was not. It is a startling commentary on the human condition. We often go to extreme lengths to get in character and become somebody we are not. We are troubled by building our brand and keeping up the image that we have created for ourselves.

Jesus' words to us are refreshing to the soul. He tells his disciples "*I am... the truth.*" Jesus is not trying to portray a brand image or to act out the truth about God. He IS the Truth. He is always truthful in His claims and always authentic in His interaction with His people.

One of the things that made Jesus a revolutionary religious figure in the first century was truthfulness. The Sadducees and the Pharisees were playing a part. They were trying to project an image of righteousness and holiness but behind closed doors, they were sinful and corrupt. For Jesus, there was no duplicitous lifestyle. His public life and private life were consistent.

Truth is not merely a set of facts and propositions. Truth is reality that is rooted in the mind of God. Author Jen Wilkin writes, "God is truth. He is its origin and its determiner. What He defines as true is eternally true, unchangingly true. Because He is truth, all of His actions reveal truth and all of His words declare it."<sup>3</sup> Every syllable that Jesus ever uttered was true 2,000 years ago and is still true today. His words are unchangingly true. The longer that time passes, the longer His words will continue to be true. He is the embodiment of truth.

**Truth is not merely a set of facts and propositions. Truth is reality that is rooted in the mind of God.**

Jesus' declaration that He is the Truth is also a declaration that any other source of salvation and lasting satisfaction is a lie. Sometimes when we experience a troubled heart in life it is because we have been listening to the whisper of the liar. He has convinced us to listen to his lie that following the Way will never lead to lasting fulfillment and ultimate joy. Just like in the Garden, Satan whispered lies to our original parents, Adam and Eve, telling them that sin will not have lasting consequences and can bring deeper happiness than obedience ever could. In those moments when

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.esquire.com/uk/culture/film/g15335475/daniel-day-lewis-craziest-method-acting-stories/>

<sup>3</sup> Jen Wilkin, "God Most Truthful." *In His Image: 10 Ways God Calls Us to Reflect His Character*, Crossway, 2018, p. 123.

the serpent whispers to our hearts, we must run back to the truth of Scripture. We must harken to the words of Jesus.

### C. The Life

When Jesus states that He is the Life, He is making a bigger claim than first comes to mind. We must peel back the layers and investigate the original language to get a better understanding of how Jesus defines Himself. As we learned earlier in this series, in the original Greek language, there are two distinct words used for “life.”

The first term that is used for life is the word “*bios*.” It is where we get our word for biology. Everything living possesses “*bios*.” We know from Scripture that God is the Giver and Sustainer of “*bios*” life (Colossians 1:16-18). We saw this truth on full display when Jesus called His friend Lazarus out of the tomb and into life. If there is an area in your life that you feel is dead, Jesus need only say the word, and beauty can rise from the ashes.

**Eternal life begins  
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with Jesus.**

The second term that is used for life goes past the physical realm and into the spiritual; Jesus uses the word “*zoe*.” *Zoe* is one of the favorite words used in John’s Gospel. In fact, he uses it thirty-six times.<sup>4</sup> The type of life that Jesus is referring to is more than physical life, it is eternal life. Eternal life is not just something that we enter after we die and get to heaven. Eternal life begins the moment we begin our personal relationship with Jesus. Eternal life is not so much about the quantity of life as it is about the quality of life.

Jesus declares to His disciples in the Upper Room that He is how we can possess eternal life. Jesus would later define what eternal life is. “*This is eternal life, that they know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.*” (John 17:3) Eternal life is not achieved by our merits, our good deeds, our church attendance, our heritage, or even by how much money we put in the offering plate each week. Eternal life is wrapped up in the person of Jesus.

Many of us put our life in the hands of our retirement account, our friendships, our career, or even in our personal health. As recent events have shown us, these functional saviors cannot bear us up. Our retirement account can take a major hit. Our careers can be lost in a day, and our health can be affected by the smallest germs. If we put our life in the hands of the temporary, we will be disappointed.

In the troubling moments of life when we feel like everything is out of control, when we feel alone, confused, and afraid we must remember Jesus’ proclamation that He is the Life. The hope that we have as Christians is we can take our lives out of our frail hands and place them into the hands of the One who not only possesses life but IS Life. Jesus allows us to enter into eternal life, by His grace.

## 4. NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER EXCEPT THROUGH ME

The first three truths help relieve the troubles of life. They are a healing balm to a hurting heart. Jesus does not just tend to our present circumstances. He provides the way for us to experience heaven with Him for all of eternity.

My Dad has been a chaplain for my entire life. For many years he worked at Memorial Hermann Hospital, but over the last decade, he began to work as a chaplain for a hospice company. Families grieve as they watch their loved ones slip away slowly. The dying person is often consumed with

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<sup>4</sup> D. H. Johnson, “Life: The Fourth Gospel.” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, edited by Joel B. Green, by Scot McKnight and I. Howard Marshall, IVP Academic., 1992, p. 469–471.

anxiety and fear; not necessarily because of death, but what lays on the other side of that threshold. Many are worried because they have no certainty where they will spend eternity. Will their good deeds outweigh their bad? Are they a good enough person? Their last days are often spent with a great amount of unrest and uncertainty.

Thankfully, Jesus is loving, kind, and direct. Jesus tells His disciples that no one will enter Heaven to be with the Father for all of eternity unless they come to Him first. Jesus is the only way that we will experience salvation and long-lasting assurance.

Many in our culture believe that Jesus' claim here is inconsiderate, unloving, and not tolerant of other religions and viewpoints. But, in truth, it is one of the most loving of Jesus' declarations. It would be unloving for Jesus to lead us down the wrong road. It would be unkind and untruthful for Him to suggest that all religious roads lead to heaven.

Jesus is tenderly guiding us to where salvation can be found. It is an exclusive claim, but truth in its very nature is exclusive. Jesus is warning us that salvation can only be found in Him. This truth is inclusive in that His salvation is available to anyone and everyone who believes. This truth gives us bold and calm assurance during life's troubles that our future is with the Father if we have come to the Son.

## HOW HIS PLAN SHAPES OUR PURPOSE

Troubles in life will come. They have the potential to rob us of our effectiveness and to derail us from knowing God and reaching others. But Jesus' claim in John 14 provides solace during life's storms. Because Jesus is the Way, He has made a way for us through the cross to have peace with God. Because Jesus is the Truth, we have an authentic Savior whose words to us are honest and true in a world plagued with lies. Because Jesus is the Life, we have entered into eternal life so we can be encouraged in temporary troubles. Jesus' plan for us is to draw near to Him during times of distress. Jesus' words in the Upper Room encourage us to let faith arise and troubles shrink.

In the Upper Room Jesus' words comforted His disciples amid one of their toughest hours. Not because He gave them a set of rules to follow or provided a worldview for them to adhere. No, Jesus was offering more than religion. He was offering Himself. He is a loving Lord and a faithful friend. We can know Him and run to Him when life's challenges seem daunting. The late Ravi Zacharias writes in *Jesus Among Other Gods*:

“I came to Him because I did not know which way to turn. I remained with Him because there is no other way I wish to turn. I came to Him longing for something I did not have. I remain with Him because I have something I will not trade. I came to Him as a stranger. I remain with Him in the most intimate of friendships. I came to Him unsure about the future. I remain with Him certain about my destiny.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ravi K. Zacharias and Kevin Johnson. *Jesus Among Other Gods: The Absolute Claims of the Christian Message*. Thomas Nelson, 2017.