

THE LOOKOUT

JANUARY 2024

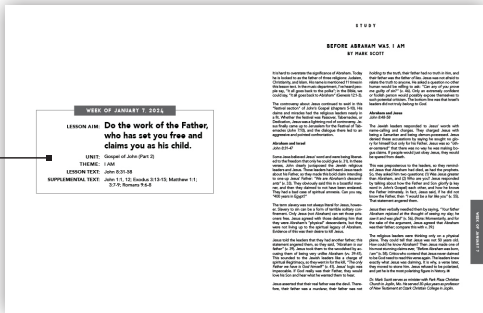
Unit: Gospel of John (Part 2)

Theme: I AM

Overview: Jesus made several claims about himself in the Gospel of John. These claims connected the dots between his name, his identity, and his mission. They all have Old Testament antecedents with additional connections to Israel. In Part 2 of this three-month study in the Gospel of John, students will learn of Jesus' superiority to Abraham, how Jesus is the Good Shepherd, the exclusive way of salvation, and the true vine (new Israel). This LORD is the great I AM.

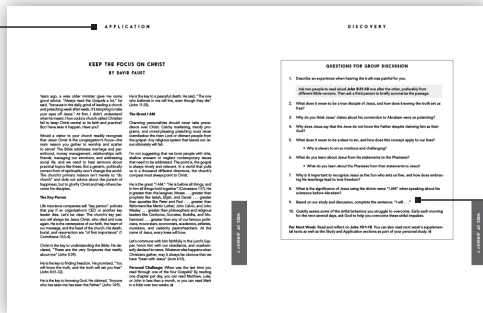
HOW TO USE

Each week has a lesson aim, lesson text, and supplemental text.



Tabs indicate the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: Study, Application, and Discovery.



Use the Discovery questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

WEEK OF JANUARY 21, 2024

LESSON AIM: **Believe in Jesus and do great things in his name; have peace in your heart.**

UNIT: Gospel of John (Part 2)

THEME: I AM

LESSON TEXT: John 14:1-21, 27

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: John 10:9; Acts 4:12; Romans 5:1-2;
Ephesians 2:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6

STUDY

I AM THE WAY

BY MARK SCOTT

The exclusivity of Jesus is a problem in a pluralistic country like the United States. There is immediate pushback when anyone says, "This is the only way." Some people think such exclusivity is narrow-minded. They contend Christian believers are pushing them into an uncomfortable corner. They charge Christians with making a reductive fallacy (i.e., a logical fallacy where many options are reduced to just one).

But what else are Christians to believe and say when Jesus said that he is the gate (John 10:9), and when Peter said that salvation is found in no one else (Acts 4:12), and when Paul said that there is one mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5)?

John 14–16 contains the Upper Room Discourse of Jesus on the night of his betrayal. It is possible that only chapter 14 was actually spoken in the upper room, for the chapter ends with these spoken words, "Come now; let us leave" (14:31). But did they actually leave right then? Jesus could have spoken the words of John 15–16 as they journeyed to Gethsemane, but he just as easily could have said these things while still in that upper room. The discourse contains warnings, promises, teaching, dialogue, metaphors, object lessons, and claims. Jesus' most stunning claim is that he is the only way to God (14:6).

He Is the Way to the Father's House

John 14:1-9

After Jesus washed the disciples' feet, predicted Judas's betrayal and Peter's denial, and taught about the new mandate (love commandment), he sought to calm the disciples' fears by saying, "Do not let your hearts be troubled." He repeated those words in verse 27. He acknowledged that the disciples believed in God (Father), and he challenged them to put their faith in him.

Where is God's house? Is it the universe? The tabernacle? The temple? The heart of believers? It seems likely that Jesus was speaking of heaven. This *house has many rooms*. Heaven is big. Heaven is being prepared. Once Jesus returns, heaven will return with him, and heaven and earth will be rejoined in perfect harmony (Revelation 21:1-5). The best thing about heaven is Jesus. He will be there.

Jesus' words confused at least two of the disciples (Thomas and Philip). Thomas expressed what the others were thinking, "How do we get there?" Jesus made his exclusive claim. He is the only way because he is *the truth*

and the life. The only way to God (*the Father*) is through Jesus. Philip wanted to see the Father. Jesus reminded him that in seeing Jesus they had in fact seen the Father. Jesus is the way to the Father's house.

He Is the Way to the Father's Works

John 14:10-14

Since the triune God is united and in perfect agreement, one member can lead people to another member's work. The Father is at work in the world to bring it back under his control. Jesus came to accomplish the Father's work by taming fallen creation, healing people, and saving the planet. The disciples would soon embark on participating in that same mission.

Father and Son are so united that to believe in one is to believe in the other. To be in one is to be in the other. To do the work of one is to participate in the work of the other. Jesus' *works* (miracles) were evidence of how the Father was destroying the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). Jesus invited the disciples into those works (the miracles recorded in Acts). Jesus said people who believe in him and his works *will do even greater things*. What will these be? Greater than miracles? He perhaps means preaching the gospel. These works must include prayer, and they must be in accordance with Jesus' commands, or otherwise one is doing ministry by the power of the flesh.

He Is the Way to the Father's Helper

John 14:15-21, 27

In each chapter of the discourse, Jesus made promises to the disciples about the Holy Spirit. He is the *Advocate* (i.e., the one who came alongside another, thus *The Helping Spirit* by Carl Ketcherside). This *Spirit of truth* had been living alongside of the disciples for three years. Now he would be living in them. They would not be *orphans*.

Jesus would be taken from the disciples within hours, but they would see him again after his resurrection. Following his ascension, the disciples would realize the great unity of the Godhead and experience both love and peace.

In AD 1054, there was a great split between the Eastern and Western churches over *filioque* (a Latin word meaning "and the Son"). Did the Father give the Spirit or did the Son give the Spirit? Yes! Because God is the way to God. ■

APPLICATION

UNTRoubLED HEARTS

BY DAVID FAUST

On the very troubling night before the crucifixion, Jesus promised to give his disciples peace. “Do not let your hearts be troubled,” he said (John 14:1). Yet, that same evening he predicted, “In this world you will have trouble” (John 16:33). How can we reconcile those two verses? Is it possible to face our troubles with untroubled hearts?

When the Lord said, “Do not let your hearts be troubled,” he used the Greek word *tarasso*, which meant to stir up, disturb, or throw into confusion—the kind of distress that often arises inside our minds. To describe the troubles his followers will face, Jesus used a different word, *thlipsis*, which means oppression, affliction, or tribulation—the kind of trouble that comes from the outside. *Thlipsis* described the way winemakers pressed grapes to extract their juice. (It’s translated “hard pressed” in 2 Corinthians 8:13.)

We should expect to face pressure from the outside, but we can have peace on the inside—the overall well-being the Hebrews called *shalom*.

Troubled Times

What do our souls need in troubled times?

Faced with conflicting ideologies, beliefs, and lifestyles, we need to choose the right direction. According to the Federal Highway Administration, there are more than 4 million miles of paved public roads in the United States, plus countless miles of unpaved trails, backroads, and paths. Likewise, contemporary culture confronts us with a multiple-choice test of spiritual pathways in the form of contrasting worldviews. The Greek word *hodos* (“road”) meant a physical highway, but it also could refer to the path we take in life. The Lord told Jeremiah, “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls” (Jeremiah 6:16).

Faced with deception and misinformation, we need a heavy dose of reality. Politicians twist the truth to get our votes. Sales reps lie to get our money. Journalists mingle facts with their own opinions. Preachers scratch “itching ears” (2 Timothy 4:3) and hesitate to address tough topics because they don’t want to offend. Who will shoot straight with us and confront us with reality? Who offers what the Greeks called *aletheia* (truth, uprightness, dependability, reality)? Who will tell us what we need to hear, not merely what we want to hear?

Faced with death and destruction, we need a daily infusion of hope. How can we experience shalom while death stares us in the face? Individually and collectively, we are sliding down a steep hill toward an open grave. Where can we find what the Greeks called *zoe* (life)? More than a mere physical existence, we long for abundant life, which includes a clear conscience, a compelling sense of purpose, and a hopeful future.

Our Trouble Bearer

To some, Jesus’ claim, “No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6) sounds overly narrow and restrictive. Actually, though, this verse contains good news. There’s a way out of the mess we’re in. Jesus is the way (*hodos*). He is the truth (*aletheia*). He is the life (*zoe*). He is our direction setter and our trouble bearer. He defines reality. He is the source of abundant life now and forever.

The Lord “daily bears our burdens” (Psalm 68:19). Through faith in him, we can face troubled times with untroubled hearts.

Personal Challenge: Jesus claimed to be “the way, the truth, and the life.” How do those words impact you personally? Thank the Lord for helping you find direction, face reality, and live with hope. ■

David Faust serves as senior associate minister with East 91st Street Christian Church in Indianapolis.

DISCOVERY

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Do you possess any similarities to your mother or father? Consider sharing some of your observations with the group

Ask two people to read aloud **John 14:1-21, 27**, one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to briefly summarize the passage.

2. In verse 1, Jesus says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled." Why might the disciples' hearts have been troubled?
3. What does Jesus mean when he says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (v. 6)?
 - What is the context of this statement?
 - What is Jesus' purpose in saying this?
4. What are your opinions of Thomas's question (v. 5) and Philip's question (v. 8)?
 - Are they surprising? Revealing? Disappointing? Encouraging?
5. Jesus says, "Whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these" (v. 12).
 - What are some things that Jesus' disciples did that might be considered greater than what Jesus did?
6. What is one area in your life where you can actively participate in the Father's works and become an instrument of change?
7. Have you experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit during difficult moments in your life? How?
8. When we show our love for Jesus by keeping his commands, he promises to show himself to us (v. 21). How and when does he show himself to us?
9. Why is obedience to Jesus' commands an essential aspect of loving him?
 - What is a command from Jesus you have found particularly impactful in your life, and how have you demonstrated obedience to it?
10. Focusing on verse 27 . . . In what ways is the peace Jesus offers distinct from what the world offers?
 - Consider some issues that have been troubling you in recent weeks. This coming week, through prayer, ask God (through Jesus) to bring peace to your heart.

For Next Week: Read and reflect on **John 15:1-20, 26-27**. You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. **■**