

I AM JESUS: The Door

DAY 1 WHO IS THE 'I AM'?

Scripture: Seven I AM statements = John 6:35, 8:12, 10:9-10, 11:25, 14:6, 15:5.

Reflection:

In John's gospel, Jesus uses the phrase "I AM" on many occasions when speaking about himself. The significance of this was not lost on the Pharisees, the Jewish leaders, and it made them angry. Although it may not be immediately apparent to us why they reacted so strongly, the repetition of the phrase draws our attention. In Exodus 3:14, God reveals His name to Moses, saying "I AM," and it is this exact phrase that Jesus is using about Himself. He is clearly declaring His divinity.

So we ask ourselves, 'I am not a Pharisee- is Jesus talking to me?' Yes, whether a person is considering Christ or is already a Christian, a believer, the authority of Jesus as the Christ and Son of God is the foundation of Christianity. These next weeks will establish Jesus as the Great I AM. This is why learning about the Great I AM is essential: to know all that Jesus said and did was recorded so that we would believe and be saved, to know more fully the depth of His love and the peace that comes with being in God's presence, and to truly experience how marvelous the Great I AM is.

Ask Yourself:

- As you read the seven I AM statements above, what are your first thoughts about God the Son?
- Which I AM statement are you most excited to learn more about? And why?
- Did you know you can ask Jesus to help your understanding of Him and His ways so that you can walk in faith? If you have not already done so today, perhaps this is your next step.

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, You indeed are the Son of God, and I am asking your Holy Spirit to encourage me to want to know You more and love You in a deeper way. Thank You, Jesus, for your presence with me. Amen.*

Take a Next Step:

- Invite someone to join you in this reading plan!
- Consider making a "Truth" list in your journal, to which you will add a word or two about each I AM statement.

DAY 2 COMING IN AND GOING OUT

Scripture: John 10:1-10

Reflection:

All homes have a door, and those who are welcome come through the door, not the window, nor the roof, nor through the walls. Likewise, Jesus invites us to come to the door, knock, ask for admission, and He will answer, offering the gift of salvation and an abundant life filled with love, peace, and joy. He does not ask for payment. He asks for faith and obedience. He also asks us to participate in going back out that door, into the world around us, and sharing the love of Jesus with others. It is in this combination, of living with Jesus and going out to share the love of Jesus with others, where a truly

abundant and satisfying life is found; It is both receiving that which we did not earn and then in turn sharing with others so that they also may live in peace with God.

Ask Yourself: Imagine Jesus inviting you into his home...

- Are you driving away at full speed? Are you peeking in the windows of God's house, living through the faith of family and friends? Are you ready to knock on the Door?
- Have you already knocked at the Door, yet prefer lounging on the front porch? Are you online with God every day, yet not wanting to come face-to-face with Him?
- Are you in God's living room, enjoying the comforts and security of residing in God the Father's house and living in relationship with Him?
- Are you taking the living room relationship with God back out the door to share with others?

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, You are the Door to all that is true and pure and good. Forgive me for the many ways I have circumvented You. Help me choose Your door, house, and learn to sit in a relationship with You in Your living room. I praise You, Lord, for the door of Jesus who provides and protects me. Amen.*

Choose a Next Step:

- If you are ready to leave the streets of uncertainty and enter the door to Jesus, knock and enter!
- If seeing Jesus as your Door leads you to admiration - thank him!
- Share with one person how Jesus the Door led you to a personal relationship with God.

DAY 3 WHAT IS HOLDING YOU BACK?

Scripture: Psalm 103; Philippians 4:7; Romans 5:1-4

Reflection:

Some people easily admit their fears; others maintain the illusion of being fearless through denial. The Bible mentions 365 times not to be afraid. Fear of having no control over what the future holds for us and those we love, fear of the past catching up with us, fear of being discounted or unliked by others, fear of falling short on skill or tasks, fear of disappointing ourselves or others, fear of sickness or dying, etc., are part of this life and all people have fears. There is the potential for any or all of these fears to become a reality.

Yet difficulties do not need to result in fearfulness/ being afraid. This may seem counterintuitive or not rational, yet the God who created the earth and knew us before we were born, the God who knows all that we have done and will do, also knows the reality of our situation and wants to be the One we rely upon to bring us through the difficulties we encounter each day.

The bigger reality of every fear and fearful situation is first recognizing God is Master over all and has provided the Door to Him through Jesus. God knows us better than we know ourselves, and He loves us beyond a measurable amount. He wants us to live a new life, following the lead of the Holy Spirit, by setting our focus on Him, not ourselves. He will satisfy us with His goodness in this world and beyond, to eternity. Peace is not the absence of fearful situations, but the peace that transcends all understanding is the result of how we position ourselves in God's presence, in relationship to Him, acknowledging His sovereignty and control above our own. This is how to "not be afraid."

Ask Yourself: Consider one difficult situation in your life right now.

- How are worry or fear holding you back, keeping you down, or paralyzing you?
- Reflect on God's faithfulness in any one specific past situation. How does his past faithfulness strengthen your faith now?
- In what way can you actively choose to trust God today? (see Philippians 4:7)

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, I acknowledge my attempts to control my circumstances through worrying or control. In every challenging situation, help me to pursue You, acknowledge your sovereignty and control, and remember I am not alone - You are my strength and source of peace every day, in all things. Amen.*

Take a Next Step:

Choose one of the 365 "do not be afraid" scriptures and memorize it.

DAY 4 THE DOOR TO ABUNDANT LIFE

Scripture: John 10:10; Matthew 6:33; Romans 5:17

Reflection:

When entering the door of God's house through Jesus, do we imagine seeing expensive wooden floors, rich colors and artwork to delight the eyes, photos of family, favorite music filling the room, a soft leather sofa to enfold our fashionably dressed body in its depths, the smell of dinner and dessert in the air, and the largest TV or book selection adorning the walls? Jesus is not talking about a life overflowing with stuff. He is speaking of a life overflowing with Him.

He is love, just, kind, caring, faithful, wise, strong, always existed and will never end, the Lord and Master of all, All Sufficient, Provider, Healer, Helper, Creator of all things, He who holds our eyelids open.

Jesus offers mercy- the removal of what we deserve as the price for our sins. He rescues our souls from guilt and eternal punishment. Jesus offers grace- the unmerited gift of everlasting life in the presence of God. Access to God is far better than access to wealth, fame, or having numerous possessions or people who adore us. We were meant to walk with God; His intent for us is to be in His presence.

Ask Yourself:

- Where am I searching for abundance and life in earthly "stuff?"
- What does my mind know and my heart feel about God's merciful forgiveness and gracious, abundant life?

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, thank You for teaching me that whatever the situation, I can be content, work in Your strength, and savor Your love and mercy. And thank You for helping me realize the state of my soul is far more important than the things in this world. Amen.*

Choose a Next Step:

- If someone has offended you, said a harsh word to you, disrespected you, or made fun of you, take steps to forgive them for their offense. This is how you can extend the grace and forgiveness which God continually extends to you.
- Be fully present with someone today as you go about your work and tasks.

DAY 5 THE DOOR = ACCESS

Scripture: Romans 5:1-11

Reflection:

The picture of Jesus as a “door” not only had meaning as a gate for a sheep. It also drew parallels with the Old Testament Exodus story. In preparation for God leading His people out of enslavement in Egypt, God promised to pass over the households in Egypt who marked their doorposts with the blood of a sacrificial lamb; thus, the destruction that would come upon the land of Egypt would not touch them. Later, God’s people were instructed to place a *mezuzah*, a small cylinder, on their doorpost to remind them of God’s promises to them each time they left their homes and returned. This became a reminder for them to bless God.

Access to God through Jesus as the final sacrifice frees us from having to set times or observe constrained office hours to meet with God or maintain rituals to be in His presence. The author of Hebrews reminds us that we can “approach God’s throne of grace with confidence” (Hebrews 4:16 NIV). We can bring him our questions, doubts, emotions, and struggles. Scripture encourages us to pray boldly. We can pray to God without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17) knowing that He hears our prayers (Psalm 4:3), and He does not sleep (Psalm 121:4). Jesus tells us to ask and according to God’s will, it will be answered (Matthew 7:7,11 & Mark 14:36). As the psalmist cried out to God in his anger, grief and frustration, so can we while keeping a reverent heart toward God.

Access to God is as informal and straightforward as taking a seat and talking to Him, listening to Him, reading Scripture, praising Him, and writing words of thanks. God loves his children and wants to be part of their everyday lives, whether at home, at work, while learning, or at play.

Ask Yourself:

- What barriers keep me from spending time with God each day?
- What have I learned about Jesus this week?
- What have I learned about myself this week?

Pause to Pray: Sit in a quiet spot. Slowly read one of today’s scripture passages out loud, reflecting on each word and listening for God’s voice. Are certain words and phrases sticking out? Take that word or phrase and slowly repeat it to yourself, allowing it to interact with your inner world of concerns, ideas, and memories. Talk to God and ask Him to transform your heart and mind through His Word.

Jesus, thank You for graciously opening the door so that I have access to You all day, every day. Amen.

Take a Next Step:

Find your Chair tomorrow! Subscribe to an “I AM Jesus” reading plan on YouVersion. Set Grace Church as “my church” on the app or search “whoisgrace”.

Find more resources at whoisgrace.com/read.

I AM JESUS: the Good Shepherd

DAY 1 THE BEST SHEPHERD

Scripture: John 10:1-18

Reflection:

I am the good shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me. (John 10:14 ESV)

Shepherds played a vital role in ancient Jewish society. They raised, supervised, protected, and cared for a very valuable commodity. Sheep provided the wool necessary to make clothing (Job 31:20), food to sustain (Nehemiah 5:18), a form of cash/wages/payment (John 2:14), and were needed for contracts and sacrifices (Genesis 21:27; Exodus 20:24).

Scripture speaks of good and bad shepherds. The bad shepherd abandoned his sheep to a predator when times became tough, neglected them when they became inconvenient, let them go their own way, which would lead to certain death, destroyed them all for financial gain, or treated them harshly, which led to fear and death as they would not reproduce when under stress.

The qualities attributed to a good shepherd are numerous: protect the sheep from wild animals while in pasture, provide a wall of protection while in the villages and cities, the sheep learn to know his voice and will follow him, provide a source of water and good pasture for food, groom them to keep in them good health, rescue those who wander off, heal those who fall and can't get up, provide what they need emotionally so they can reproduce, seek out those who deliberately go their own way.

Even the best shepherd could not compare to the care, love, and perfection of Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

Ask Yourself:

- What does it mean that Jesus is a "good shepherd"?
- How does this image of Jesus help me see Him more clearly?
- Do I know the voice of my Good Shepherd? What other noises get in the way?

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, You have not only provided a way to God, but I thank You for being the One who also wants to sustain me in every part of life. Forgive me for doubting Your care for me. Help me to understand Your unending provision more clearly, and help me willingly place myself in Your care today. Amen.*

Take a Next Step:

- Invite someone to join you in this reading plan!
- Consider making a "Truth" list in your journal, to which you will add a word or two about each I AM statement as you read and learn.

DAY 2 THE GOOD SHEPHERD - PROVISION

Scripture: Psalm 23

Reflection:

Psalm 23 is often read as a comfort at funerals, yet this psalm is not really about death but about the fullness of life found in Jesus, the Good Shepherd! King David is the author, and his early life was marked by the hard work and responsibility of being a shepherd, encompassing blessings, trials, success, accomplishments, times of egregious sin, sincere repentance, and ultimately, someone who authentically loved God.

Let's explore the 2 metaphors used in this psalm. First, although both roles are unique, shepherd (vs 1-4) and host (vs 5-6) are unified as fulfilled in Jesus. The sheep and the guests represent us, the recipients of Jesus' provision.

Jesus is able and wants to: provide for our needs, quiet our hearts, lead us to salvation, restore us, help us face our fears, and actively walk through life with us. His abundant blessings provide more than we can even imagine, beyond this physical life and into eternity. *We will dwell in the house of the Lord forever* (Psalm 23:6 NIV)!

Ask Yourself:

- In what ways have I seen God provide for my life?
- What are my current circumstances? What do I need from my Good Shepherd?

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, You are the living water of life, providing every good thing in ways I cannot fully comprehend. You even give an unending, consistent flow of grace. Thank You for reminding me You are my Good Shepherd. Amen.*

Take a Next Step:

- Does someone in your life need the care of the Good Shepherd? Be prepared to share Psalm 23 with them!

DAY 3 OBEDIENCE

Scripture: John 10:2-5; John 6:66-69

Reflection:

Each of us has the capacity to learn through physical actions, hearing/audible experiences, speaking, seeing, reading, and through experiences. Yet most of us learn better one way over another. It should be of no surprise that God already knows how we learn; He made us. In yesterday's devotional, Jesus addressed the physical aspects of being a provider. Today, Jesus reveals himself through speaking the oral or auditory categories.

Like the sheep, when Jesus wants to move us, He speaks to us. The way of life is through hearing His voice. We may say, 'I have never heard God speak in an audible way.' God speaks to us through His scripture and prayer time with Him, to name two. Scripture has not always been in a digital or written format; it was once orally communicated and passed on from generation to generation, until it was

recorded on clay tablets, parchment, or vellum. The average person only heard God's word read aloud by a church leader, even well after the printing press was developed in the 1400s.

Reading the Scriptures and prayer are vital spiritual practices. A deep sense of peace may overcome us, or when we are suffering, Jesus' voice may say, "*Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest*" (Matthew 11:28 NLT). Jesus is the Door, the only way to God, and now Jesus is calling us to Him directly, as sheep to the Good Shepherd. When we hear His voice, our job is to obey and follow Him.

Ask Yourself:

- Do I know the voice of my Good Shepherd? What other noises get in the way?
- What is the Good Shepherd saying to me? What am I going to do about it?

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, I thank You for calling me by my name - I believe You are my Good Shepherd! May Your Spirit help me to hear Your voice as I read Your Word and talk to You as I pray. I want to follow as You lead me. Amen*

Take a Next Step:

- Practice listening! Turn on worship music as you drive or do chores. What do you learn about the Good Shepherd through song? Or try listening to John 10 with an audio Bible. What do you hear?

DAY 4 RELATIONSHIP

Scripture: Isaiah 43:1-7; Psalm 139:1-24

Reflection:

Both Isaiah 43 and Psalm 139 speak to God's intimate knowledge of His people, collectively and individually. We are neither lost in the crowd nor lost in our own isolation. He sees you, He sees me. Yes, He really sees us, as we sleep, as we wake, as we walk through the day, when we sit down and stand up, He knows our thoughts and emotions and the state of our hearts. There is nothing or nowhere we can hide from the Good Shepherd!

Perhaps there are some parts of our lives we wish He did not see, but He does. So instead of hiding, start with confession and transparency as you talk with Jesus today. He is for your good. He wants to transform your heart and mind by His Spirit, because you are precious to Him and He loves you. He wants to lead you into a deeper relationship with Him. Knowing God sees you and knows you inside and out frees you from all pretension and pretending.

Ask Yourself:

- What is my gut reaction to knowing there is nowhere I can go, no thought or action that can be hidden from God?
- How does God's omnipresence and omniscience change my posture toward Him? Is there something I need to confess?
- Why is it 'good' that the Good Shepherd knows me inside and out?

Pause to Pray: *You, Lord, are my Good Shepherd. You are inside and out, and the One who called me by name to be Yours. I delight in Your presence, Lord. You know my thoughts and my ways. Help me to hear You today, with my whole heart, and follow Your voice. Amen.*

Take a Next Step:

- Everywhere you go today, imagine the presence of the Good Shepherd in the seat next to you and find comfort knowing that He is with you!

DAY 5 REJOICE

Scripture: Luke 15:3-10

Reflection:

We have learned that Jesus is the Good Shepherd who leads us, claims us, and sees us. Today, we learn that He even rejoices over us.

Each day we experience glimpses of joy: the beauty of a new born baby, meaningful conversations with a friend, watching the sunset with a loved one, making a new friend, delight over a child's accomplishments, a test passed, a degree earned, a productive day of business, a skill conquered, the cancer free bell rang, singing, quiet time with God,

Yet it is nearly incomprehensible that the Creator of all that exists, not only seeks us and loves us, but also finds joy *in us* as individuals. He pulls us into His embrace. He reminds each one of us, 'You are my son, my daughter'.

Ask Yourself:

- Imagine being pulled into the mighty and gentle arms of Jesus. What would his hug feel like in my soul?
- How will I respond to the love of God today? How can I rejoice? How can I give thanks? Who can I tell?

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, I have chosen You, the Good Shepherd, the way of faithfulness. Teach me Your ways and help me to obey as I hear Your voice and follow Your lead. Thank You for always having Your eyes on me. Help me to speak and share Your goodness with others. Amen.*

Take a Next Step:

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I AM JESUS: the Light of the World

DAY 1 LIGHT vs DARKNESS

Scripture: John 8:12; Exodus 13:17-22

Reflection:

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 ESV)

We all need light; that is a universal truth. Plants need light to grow, and we need plants to live. The cost associated with creating light began with the labor-intensive cutting and gathering of wood for fires, followed by the collection and melting of wax, and today includes the expenses incurred during the acquisition, transportation, and distribution of gas and electricity to produce light. It is not a coincidence that God created the sun, which gives both light and warmth. Light hits the surface of our bodies, and the warmth sinks into our depths.

In John 8, Jesus used the Feast of Tabernacles as a platform to reveal his true identity. The feast was celebrated for seven days, and enormous lamps were lit in the temple courts as a reminder of how God led them through the wilderness. But at the end of the festival, when Jesus spoke these words, the lamps had been extinguished. Imagine the significance of His words in that darkened space. Imagine the people remembering the words of the Psalms:

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. (Psalm 119:105 NIV)

even the darkness will not be dark to You; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to You. (Psalm 139:12 NIV)

Since Genesis three, darkness has brought with it times of trouble. But God does not leave us defenseless. Just as we cannot survive without the sun's light, we spiritually cannot live without The Light. Difficult circumstances that feel dark remind us that we need the Light.

Ask Yourself:

- How do I feel when I walk through a dark space?
- What has spiritual darkness looked like in my life?
- What does it mean to me that Jesus is the Light of the World?

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, I call out to You in my darkness, I will hold on tight to You. I know You hear my cries and will answer me because You love me. You are The Light, which will never be extinguished, and in this truth I rest. Amen.*

Take a Next Step:

- Invite someone to join you in this reading plan!
- Consider making a "Truth" list in your journal, to which you will add a word or two about each I AM statement as you read and learn.

DAY 2 GUIDE

Scripture: Isaiah 42:1-9; John 14:10

Reflection:

Read the Old Testament prophetic announcement recorded in Isaiah 42:1-9. This foretelling of Jesus gave the people hope during years of troubles, a promise for the future, and guidance on how to be in right standing with God. Jesus perfectly fulfills the promises in Isaiah 42:3: Jesus has always been. Jesus was with God. All things were made through Jesus.

Blindness of any degree keeps a person from seeing with clarity what is in front of them. Spiritual blindness is similar. A person can know about God, but not really know Him. Jesus is God's answer to help people truly see and know Him, to enter into a deep, abiding relationship with Him as Father and us as His children.

Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. (John 14:10 ESV)

The Light of Jesus reveals the Father to us through his life and ministry. Through his death and resurrection. Through the Scriptures

Ask Yourself:

- To what degree do I allow Jesus to guide my life?
- How has God's word been a *lamp for my feet and a light for my path?* (Psalm 139 NIV)

Pause to Pray: *Praise you, Jesus, the Light of the World! You are faithful. You lead and guide me. You are the light of my life. Amen.*

Take a Next Step:

Take a moment to let this revelation sink in - God keeps His promises. He has a perfect plan in place, and you are part of that plan. Thank Him! Look for an opportunity to reveal the Light of Jesus to someone within your circle of influence today.

DAY 3 REVEALED

Scripture: [2 Samuel 11-12](#); [Psalm 51](#); [Mark 8:34-38](#)

Reflection:

While sitting on the front porch in the early morning before the sun comes up, the land is bathed in darkness. Then the first hint of light starts to reveal the environment which was always there, just not seen: one tree, a car, the ocean, or a building at a time. The sun's heat warms the face and bones, and the ultraviolet light removes impurities from surfaces. And the light also reveals what we would like to hide: dandelions in the grass, an old rusted car in the front yard, skin blemishes, or even worse, acts of the night.

King David was called "a man after God's own heart," yet even he committed terrible, selfish, destructive sins. His story makes for fascinating reading. It also reveals how light reveals what hides in

the darkness. David would have liked to have his sins against Uriah, Bathsheba, and God hidden, but the light of truth revealed them. Nathan confronted David with his sin so that it was no longer hidden but now revealed. David's sins were terrible, but his love and fear of God were greater. When his adulterous sin was brought to light, David confessed, repented, and accepted the consequences. The light of truth always reveals that God's ways are good and just, and his grace and mercy are the only means of forgiveness.

Jesus instructs us in Mark 8:34-38 (NIV),

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory...”

Ask Yourself:

- Is there unconfessed sin in your life? Are you filled with shame over past regrets? Read Psalm 51 out loud and confess those things to God.
- How has the light of God's truth exposed sin and error in your life? Praise God for exposing darkness and for his mercy and forgiveness.

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, I do not want to hide from You in the darkness any longer. I am weighed down by guilt, and I ask You to forgive me.... Thank You for forgiving me, setting me back on the straight and narrow path, and restoring my joy... Amen.*

Take a Next Step:

If you have confessed your sin to God and also need to ask someone to forgive you, go to them!

DAY 4 YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Scripture: [Matthew 5:14-16](#)

Reflection:

Not only is Jesus the Light of the World, but He tells us that all who follow Him are also light to the world. This light is the most precious treasure a person can ever possess. Unlike most treasures, when shared, the treasure of Christ's light does not decrease. His light is like a lamp that never runs out of fuel, which means we can share the treasure unselfishly. Jesus instructs us to put our light on a high place for all to see, so that others will be drawn to the Light of the world that is in us.

To share the light of Christ is a blessing to others and brings glory to God the Father.

Ask Yourself:

- What are the ways that you keep the light of Christ hidden so that no other person can see it?
- Consider where you live, work, learn, and/or play. How can you shine a light in those spaces through your attitude, character, words, or actions?

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, thank You for being the Light within me! Give me the courage to share your light so that others will be drawn to your hope and find joy in Your presence... Amen.*

Take a Next Step: Brainstorm 3-5 ways you can be light to the darkness in a space where you live, work, learn, or play. Choose 1 and start today!

DAY 5 WALK IN THE LIGHT

Scripture: 1 John 1:1-10

Reflection:

God is Light, and if we choose to walk in the Light, we have a relationship with Him. Yet even when we sin against Him, we are not stuck in the dark, for

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9, NIV)

What an amazing promise! The only right response is genuine gratitude to God, the kind of gratitude that leads us to authentically share the love of God with others.

Praise God for the Word of God which gives us the Story of God, the truth of the Gospel, and teaches how to respond. The four gospels and the letters of the New Testament are available and accessible, and we can share this good news wherever we live, work, learn, play, and beyond. May our words and actions shine the Light of Christ in our neighbors, cities, regions, and around the world!

Ask Yourself:

- Read 1 John 1:1-10 more than once (try reading in a different translation). Which words and phrases stand out to you?
- What does it mean for you to “walk in the light” where you live, work, learn, or play?

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, You are the Light of the world! Thank you for bringing me into your light, for filling me with your light. I'm so grateful for your forgiveness. I ask you to give me boldness to shine your light wherever I go... Amen.*

Take a Next Step:

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I AM JESUS: the True Vine

DAY 1 DEPENDENCE

Scripture: [John 15:1-8](#)

Reflection:

Jesus often uses everyday objects as metaphors for the Christian life. In today's scripture, Jesus proclaims, "I am the True Vine." A vine is the woody vertical component of a plant, which brings water from the roots to the branches, leaves, and fruit. In this metaphor, Christ is the vine, his followers are the branches, and God is the gardener (NIV) or vinedresser (ESV). It is God who wisely identifies what needs to be trimmed and pruned so that the whole plant is healthy and flourishing. This is the kind of growth that makes Christ's followers more like Jesus Christ himself. Fruit grows from a healthy vine and healthy branches.

The metaphor of a vine and branches reminds us that we cannot sustain ourselves. It is God our Creator who designed us, created us, and called us by name. It is God the Creator who causes the sun to shine on us, provides us with water, and provides us with food. King David wrote this praise: *The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it* (Psalm 24:1 NIV). As humans, we are dependent on the goodness of God our Creator.

As Christians, we are dependent on Jesus, our Savior. He clearly tells us, "*Apart from me, you can do nothing*" (John 15:5b NIV). When we live as dependent branches on the True Vine, our lives will bear good fruit that brings glory to God and His goodness to others.

Ask Yourself:

Meditate on the metaphor of a vine and branches.

- What is the state of your branch? Hibernation? Full of fruit? Withered?
- In what ways do you draw "nutrients" from the True Vine? What are those "nutrients"?

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, You alone are my source of life! Forgive me for believing I can be self-sufficient and teach me to depend more fully on You. God, cut off the parts in me that resist obedience and lack faith. I want to grow and flourish and bear good fruit... Amen.*

Take a Next Step:

- Invite someone to join you in this reading plan!
- Consider making a "Truth" list in your journal, to which you will add a word or two about each I AM statement as you read and learn.

DAY 2 THE TRUE VINE

Scripture: [John 15:1](#); [Isaiah 5:1-7](#); [Proverbs 3:5-6](#)

Reflection:

"I am the True Vine" (John 15:1 NIV) Notice that Jesus emphasizes he is the *true* vine. Apparently, it is possible for Christians to become dependent on another vine, another source of life. Before Jesus lived on this earth as fully man and fully God, the people of God went through periods when they relied on themselves rather than relying on God. When Jesus declares He is the True Vine, He is shifting their focus away from any false vine (self, other people, social media, money, etc.). In John 10:10, Jesus clearly tells us, *"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full"* (NIV). He is the true source of life, the True Vine.

Isaiah tells the story of a vineyard which God planted. The vineyard represents the house of Israel and Judah, the people God set apart for himself. These are the people whom God consistently sought, nourished, provided for, and often rescued from themselves. Yet his people rejected the beauty and abundance he provided, instead living lives of "bloodshed" and "distress" (Isaiah 5:7, NIV).

We are not unlike the people of the Old Testament. God has provided a way for us to live abundant lives by staying connected to the True Vine, which is our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Depending on the True Vine and Submitting to the Gardener (God) is not like submitting to any other person or organization. God is perfect; people are not. People can take advantage of positions of power, abuse, and hurt. God does not. Similarly dangerous is submitting to our own wants, desires, and what we think is best. We were not created to trust in our own strengths, emotions, abilities, and goodness alone. Instead, each of us must *"trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all of your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight"* (Proverbs 3:5-6, NIV).

Ask Yourself:

- What are the images, feelings, or memories that come to mind when you hear the words 'submit', 'obey', or 'trust'?
- Consider the character of God and the saving work of Jesus Christ. Why are they worthy of your trust and obedience?

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, I do not want to be a wild one, living for myself and outside of Your vineyard, your presence, your abundance. I want to be wise in what is good, trusting in You, the source of life. Help me to be obedient in heart and actions... Amen.*

Take a Next Step:

- Keep Proverbs 3:5-7 on your mind today. Set an alarm to read it a few times and let God's words feed your soul.

DAY 3 A PERFECT FATHER

Scripture: [John 15:7-9](#); [Hebrews 12:7-11](#)

Reflection:

The language of the Scriptures regarding the relationship between God and his people is often familial. He is the Father, and we are his children. When Jesus calls us to “remain” or “abide”, He is expressing a desire for a more intimate relationship with each of us as members of the family of God. Within this loving relationship, there is a recognized authority, the Father. Though earthly fathers may exhibit good or bad character, God is holy, just, and good. God is perfect! And He is a perfect parent. Hebrews 12 reminds us that to be a child is to be disciplined. Good discipline always has a good purpose and is an integral part of life from birth to death: from potty training to language acquisition, from holding a pencil to throwing and catching a ball, from household chores to workplace skills, from house rules to knowing and following government laws. God also disciplines us in order to mold and shape us for our good and his glory.

God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. [11](#)No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. (Hebrews 12:10-11, NIV)

You are a branch on Christ’s vine, and the good Gardener, God the Father, desires to trim and prune (discipline) so that you produce “a harvest of righteousness and peace.”

Ask Yourself:

- Meditate on this truth, “I am a child of God.” How does that feel? What are the day-to-day implications of that truth in your life?
- How might God the Father be pruning and disciplining you right now?

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, thank you for saving my life and bringing me into the family of God. Father, You are good and perfect. Help me to simply open my closed fists of control and submit myself to Your love and even discipline today... Amen.*

Take a Next Step:

- Meditate on the character of God the Father. Choose one of these scriptures to help get you started: Exodus 34:6-7; Isaiah 43:2; Isaiah 65:24; John 3:16; Matthew 11:28-30; 1 John 4:16, 18.

DAY 4 GOOD FRUIT

Scripture: [John 1:1-5](#); [Galatians 5:13-26](#); [John 3:16](#)

Reflection:

The fruit is the product that grows on the vine. We learned Jesus is the vine, which gives life to the branches, leaves, and fruit. Jesus gave of himself, like the vine feeds nutrients to the fruit. God loves us so much that He made a great sacrifice. Jesus willingly gave up His life so that “whoever believes in Him will have eternal life” with God (John 3:16, NIV), and His Spirit will abide in each believer.

Our role as branches is to produce good fruit. Jesus is the means by which this is possible: “*If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing*” (John 15:5, NIV).

What does this good fruit look like? The early church was wondering the same thing, so the Spirit of Christ inspired Paul to give us an answer. Galatians 5 describes the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, forbearance (patience), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23, NIV).

Ask Yourself:

- Reflect on the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. Ask God to bring some Christians to mind who bear this good fruit. How would you describe them? How have they impacted your life?
- Galatians 5 contrasts the good fruit of the Spirit with the “desires of the flesh” (Galatians 5:19-21, NIV). Are any of these present in your life? Confess and repent (turn away)!

Pause to Pray: *Jesus you have nourished me with all I need so that I am good and healthy. Lead me to do Your will, you are my God. Help me to identify any unhealthy ways in me and lead me in Your good and perfect way. I want to draw deeply from You, the source of life, the True Vine, and produce abundant and sweet fruit... Amen.*

Take a Next Step:

- We all need a little encouragement! Send a note to someone in your life who bears the good fruit of the Spirit. Consider asking them to meet you for coffee and ask them about the spiritual practices and rhythms of their life.

DAY 5 FELLOWSHIP & MULTIPLICATION

Scripture: John 15:12-17; Luke 8:5-15; Hebrews 10:24-25

Reflection:

Does a single grape grow on a vine? Possible but not likely. Grapes grow in bunches or clusters. This is also the way followers of Christ are meant to live and grow: in community with other believers. We are brothers and sisters in fellowship with Christ and with one another. Hebrews 10 reminds us,

“let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another...” (Heb 10:24-25, NIV).

This fellowship with Christ and with one another supports us in our mission to “make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19, NIV). Together we produce the good fruit of the Spirit and share it with the people around us hoping that they, too, will become part of the family of God.

Jesus uses another agricultural metaphor to describe how the Kingdom of God will multiply. In the Parable of the Sower, the seed is the Word of God, the Good News of Jesus Christ, shared and scattered wherever the farmer walks. The parable reminds us to be generous storytellers- telling the story of God’s work in our life and bearing the good fruit of the Spirit.

Ask Yourself:

- When was the last time you had a spiritual conversation with another Christian?
- When was the last time you had a spiritual conversation with someone who doesn’t yet know the redeeming love of Jesus?

- Why do you avoid these conversations? What have you learned from these conversations?

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, thank you for your saving grace, your abundant love, the presence of your Spirit. You have blessed me greatly and I want to share Your love and good fruit with others. Help me to be bold... Amen.*

Take a Next Step:

- Make a plan to have a spiritual conversation with another Christian. But also be ready for a spontaneous opportunity!
- Listen for an opportunity to share good fruit with a nonbeliever. Practice telling your story in a few sentences: "I once was..., but then I met Jesus..., and now I am..."

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