

Lesson Seven

“I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life”

Jesus is the only source of every spiritual blessing

John 14:1-7

Introduction

In a 1990 poll, Americans were asked whether they believed that all religions pray to the same god. Sixty-seven percent agreed that was true. Even among those who claimed to be “born again” Christians, nearly half agreed that all religions pray to the same god. About the same percentages in each group also believed that there is no such thing as “absolute truth.”

Why do you think these ideas are so popular today?

Why should the church be concerned about these false beliefs?

Read John 14:1-7

1. Looking at verse 1, how are the disciples feeling?
2. Look back at the previous chapter, chapter 13, verses 31 to 36. Why are the disciples feeling the way they are?
3. What is the first step toward not being troubled that Jesus gives His disciples in verse 1?
4. What does it mean to “believe” in God and Jesus?

Psalm 46:10 – Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!

5. The disciples are worried that Jesus will no longer be with them. Can you relate to this? When do we face similar fears?

Read John 14:2-3

6. The disciples are troubled over Jesus' departure from them. What does Jesus say He's departing from them to do?
7. Why would this fact be a comfort for the disciples? Is Jesus leaving for Himself and His own good?
8. What does it mean that Jesus was going to "prepare a place" for His disciples? How does He do this?

Hebrews 10:11-14, 19-23 – And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.¹² But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,¹³ waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.¹⁴ For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified...¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God,²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

9. Some of you may recall the King James Version which reads, "In my Father's house are many mansions." The Greek word translated *mansions* in the KJV and *rooms* in the ESV is defined by Strong's Bible Dictionary as "a staying, i.e. residence: abode, mansion." The word doesn't carry the grandeur of the English word *mansion*. It denotes a solid, dependable, permanent dwelling place. How is the promise that Jesus goes to prepare a dependable, permanent dwelling place a comfort to the disciples and to us when we face loss and persecution in this life?

*And take they our life, goods, fame, child or wife; those these all be gone, they yet have nothing won;
the kingdom ours remaineth. – A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*

Romans 8:35-39 - Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?³⁶ As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Read John 14:4-6

10. Look ahead to John 16:16-18. Is Thomas the only confused disciple?
11. What does Thomas's first comment reveal about the disciples' understanding of what Jesus is saying?
12. Are Thomas's doubts understandable in this situation? Why or why not?
13. How does Jesus deal with Thomas's doubts?
14. Let's dig into the "I Am" statement in this passage, starting first with the fact that Jesus is "the way." How is Jesus "the way"? What is the difference between Jesus saying "*I am the way*" and "*I am showing you the way*"?

Romans 8:1 – There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:27 – For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13 – For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

15. How is Jesus "the truth"? What is the difference between Jesus saying "*I am the truth*" and "*I have the truth*"?

- a. Let's start with John 1:1. What is Jesus according to John 1:1?

John 1:1 – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

- b. Read this passage from John 17. You'll notice that verse 17 is highlighted. What does Jesus pray God would sanctify us by? With what does He equate the truth?

*John 17:15-17 – I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷**Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.***

- c. The Word is the truth. What (Who) else is the Word?

- d. What is the difference between Jesus saying “I *am* the truth” and “I *have* the truth”?

Hebrews 1:1-2 – Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

16. How is Jesus “the life”? What is the difference between saying Jesus *is* the life and Jesus *leads* to life?

Isaiah 25:8 – He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.

Hebrews 2:14 – Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil[.]

Galatians 2:20 – I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Read John 14:7

17. The disciples had never seen the Father. How could they know him?

Closing Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for coming to earth to die for my sins. Lead me ever to look to you as the Way to eternal life, the Truth that gives me eternal life, and as the Life itself. With you I need nothing else.
Amen.

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Introduction

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Why do you think these ideas are so popular today?

Why should the church be concerned about these false beliefs?

Read John 14:1-7

1. Looking at verse 1, how are the disciples feeling?

The disciples are apparently troubled. The word for troubled carries the exact meaning we would expect of it, anxious, worried, restless, disquieted (the opposite of calm), perhaps fearful, even.

2. Look back at the previous chapter, chapter 13, verses 31 to 36. Why are the disciples feeling the way they are?

The disciples are feeling troubled because Jesus told them that he is leaving them. Keep in mind, also, when Jesus is speaking these words in the larger context of Jesus time with the disciples. Jesus is speaking these words on what we call Maundy Thursday. So not only are the disciples worried about Jesus leaving them, but they are about to have a lot of worry in their lives. Like, a lot.

Jesus is comforting them in their anxiety about him leaving, but these words will hopefully also provide them comfort in the very difficult days to come.

3. What is the first step toward not being troubled that Jesus gives His disciples in verse 1?

The disciples have some fears and worry over the fact that Jesus is leaving. The first step in overcoming the anxiety? “Believe in God, believe also in me.”

4. What does it mean to “believe” in God and Jesus?

And we know that the word believe doesn’t just mean “acknowledge the fact that God exists, and acknowledge, also, the fact that I exist.” No. Jesus is telling the disciples, “trust and put your confidence in God the Father and God the Son.”

This is step one in not being anxious. Have faith. It makes me think of Psalm 46:10.

Psalm 46:10 – Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!

This verse is in a Psalm that talks about a raging world, falling apart at the seams, and this is God's response to it—be still. He says these same words to our hearts and minds when we worry. He says it here to the disciples—be still; trust God; trust Me.

5. The disciples are worried that Jesus will no longer be with them. Can you relate to this? When do we face similar fears?

Sometimes, it can feel like us against the world. When the world is raging around us, we get scared that Jesus isn't with us. Sometimes that prayer during the service of the Sacrament feels like a desperate plea, to me. ("As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes;" and then we pray, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.") Seriously, Jesus, come! We need you!

When Jesus tells the disciples to trust Him and not be anxious, he speaks it to us, too. Jesus may not be physically here with us, but we can still trust that He is taking care of us and has not left us alone, even if we can't see Him.

Jesus really is concerned for those He is leaving behind, us included.

So, this whole thing that Jesus is about to get into about preparing a place for His disciples? It is all a response to their fear over Him leaving. He says these things to comfort the disciples. So let's move on from the first verse, finally.

Read John 14:2-3

6. The disciples are troubled over Jesus' departure from them. What does Jesus say He's departing from them to do?

He's going to prepare a place for them.

7. Why would this fact be a comfort for the disciples? Is Jesus leaving for Himself and His own good?

Jesus is leaving them, but He's not leaving them forever. And He's not leaving them to go on vacation for Himself. He's not going to get some R&R. He's leaving them for them. He's leaving them in the immediate to prepare a place for them in eternity.

8. What does it mean that Jesus was going to "prepare a place" for His disciples? How does He do this?

My first mental picture of this is Jesus going up to heaven to get our rooms ready, like we would prepare a house for guests to come. But that's not exactly the preparation that Jesus is talking about.

Hebrews 10:11-14, 19-23 – And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.¹² But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,¹³ waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.¹⁴ For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified...¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God,²² let us draw near with

a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

Jesus prepares a place for us by his suffering, death, and resurrection. By this, heaven has been opened to us.

What event does this Hebrews passage remind you of? Something that happens after the crucifixion? When the curtain of the temple was torn! The author of Hebrews picks up on that picture here, whether he has in mind that event or not, we can't know for certain, but we do know that his statement is true. Jesus has opened the way for us by his blood. And as a matter of fact, he doesn't just open the way, He is the Way, which we will get to in a bit here.

9. Some of you may recall the King James Version which reads, “In my Father's house are many mansions.” The Greek word translated *mansions* in the KJV and *rooms* in the ESV is defined by Strong’s Bible Dictionary as “a staying, i.e. residence: abode, mansion.” The word doesn’t carry the grandeur of the English word *mansion*. It denotes a solid, dependable, permanent dwelling place. How is the promise that Jesus goes to prepare a dependable, permanent dwelling place a comfort to the disciples and to us when we face loss and persecution in this life?

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Romans 8:35-39 - Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Romans passage comes right after the words about how our current suffering does not compare to the glory that is to come. No matter what happens here, our residency in the kingdom of God is sure and certain.

Read John 14:4-6

10. Look ahead to John 16:16-18. Is Thomas the only confused disciple?

They are all confused, Thomas is just brave enough to speak up about it. Is it surprising that Thomas would be the one to speak up here and tell Jesus what He is saying doesn't make sense? We see him being the skeptic elsewhere in Scripture, too, don't we? But Thomas here is not speaking only for himself. He is the mouthpiece for the disciples who don't fully understand what Jesus says to them.

11. What does Thomas's first comment reveal about the disciples' understanding of what Jesus is saying?

I imagine Jesus, the great and wise teacher, uttering these beautiful verses about preparing a home for the disciples with the Father, and telling them that they already know the way. And Thomas looking around and being like, “What the heck are you talking about, Jesus? What does

that even mean, ‘we already know the way’? We don’t even know where you’re going, let alone the way to get there.” Thomas’s comment reveals that the disciples don’t get what Jesus is saying. And the reality is that they won’t fully know until after the resurrection.

12. Are Thomas’ doubts understandable in this situation? Why or why not?

The disciples are not thinking about the way in which Jesus will accomplish His work as the promised Messiah. They know that He is coming to save them, but they don’t fully understand how He is going to go about doing that. They may still have their brains rooted in the belief of the day that the Messiah would in glory to reign on earth and establish a kingdom here, so arrest, suffering, and crucifixion are not on their radar.

We have the benefit of knowing the end of the story. It’s easy for us to read the beginning of John 14 and say, “Oh, of course. Jesus went to suffer and die so that we might have an eternal home in heaven, duh. That’s exactly what Jesus says. He’s speaking so plainly!” Well, he’s speaking plainly for people on this side of the resurrection, on this side of 2000 years of church history. But for the disciples, I think Thomas’s confusion is absolutely understandable.

13. How does Jesus deal with Thomas’s doubts?

Paul Kretzmann says of this passage and the doubts of the disciples, “The disciples knew, but they did not know that they knew. Sorrow had benumbed their spiritual faculties. With infinite patience, therefore, the Lord gives them a brief summary of all His teaching.”

Instead of severely chastising, he teaches them with this “summary” of sorts in verse 6. “Thomas...it’s Me. I’m the way.” The only rebuke is a gentle one at the end, and Jesus uses it as a jumping off point for more teaching about His divine nature. (“If ye had known Me, ye should have known the Father. Their knowledge was not yet so deep and complete as it well might have been.”)

14. Let’s dig into the “I Am” statement in this passage, starting first with the fact that Jesus is “the way.”

How is Jesus “the way”? What is the difference between Jesus saying “I am the way” and “I am showing you the way”?

Remember what we read earlier from Hebrews? Jesus has opened the way for us. But beyond opening the way, Jesus says He is the Way.

Romans 8:1 – There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:27 – For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13 – For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.¹³ For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

You guys may be wondering why I put these verses here, but I want to point out the language used here by Paul.

How are we connected to Christ in the verse from Romans (it says we are...it’s a two letter word...in!)?

How are we connected to Christ in the Galatians verse? We wear Him, he is on us, covering us like a Jesus suit. Or maybe like an M&M, Jesus is like our candy coating.

And how about in 1 Corinthians. How are we connected to Christ there? We are literally part of Him. A member of His body.

It is all language of being one with Christ. Jesus doesn't just show us the way to heaven, he isn't just a path we have to follow, he is the actual vehicle. In Christ, we get to heaven.

If Jesus said he was showing us the way, the emphasis would be on following his example, looking to him as a guide. Are we supposed to do that? Yes. But is keeping the Law the way to get to heaven for us? Can we do that? No, we can't. Thanks be to God Jesus did.

(IF TIME) Jumping off of that, before we get to the next question, what is the difference between Jesus saying He is the way and saying He is a way? Jesus is the only way to heaven. No one comes to the Father except through Him.

Now, in similar fashion to the previous question...

15. Look at the Scripture below to help answer the following questions: how is Jesus "the truth"?
 - a. Let's start with John 1:1. What is Jesus according to John 1:1?

We are going to walk through this one a bit slower, so I've put in some additional questions to help us out. Would someone read this? What is Jesus? The Word.

John 1:1 – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

- b. Read this passage from John 17. You'll notice that verse 17 is highlighted. What does Jesus pray God would sanctify us by? With what does He equate the truth?

This passage says (Read). Jesus here is praying for us. This is when Jesus is praying in the garden of Gethsemane (on the same day as the story we are reading now; remember that John 14 is happening on Maundy Thursday). So, Jesus is praying that God would sanctify us in something.

He prays that we would be sanctified by the truth. With what does He equate the truth? What does He say is the truth? The Word!

John 17:15-17 – I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

- c. The Word is the truth. What (Who) else is the Word?

This is like logical consequence stuff, right? Jesus is the Word of God; the Word of God is Truth; therefore, Jesus is Truth.

Let's think about this another way. The word truth means "in accordance with fact or reality", right? God is the Creator of the universe. Look back to John 1. All things were made by God the Father through the Word who is...Jesus. Any "truth" in the world has as its source, God. He establishes reality.

d. What is the difference between Jesus saying “I am the truth” and “I have the truth”?

**What is the difference between saying Jesus is the Truth and Jesus has the truth?
Before we answer, let me ask you, are both of those statements accurate (I was going to say true, but I don't want to overuse the word)?**

Yes! Jesus is the Truth and contains and has the truth. But many people over time have had the truth. Look at the passage printed under this question.

Hebrews 1:1-2 – Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

(Side note, we also here this language of God speaking by the prophets elsewhere in Scripture, like Luke 1:70, Ezekiel 38:17, Zechariah 7:7...Hebrews isn't a one-off).

These verses kind of summarize the difference between having and being the truth. Many people speak and have the truth. We (hold up Bible) speak and have the truth. Jesus goes beyond having and speaking the truth. He is the source of truth.

We don't just believe what He says, we put our belief in Him.

16. How is Jesus “the life”? What is the difference between saying Jesus is the life and Jesus leads to life?

Isaiah 25:8 – He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.

Hebrews 2:14 – Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil[.]

Galatians 2:20 – I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

We don't need to examine these verses, I just put them here to help us answer the question. What does Jesus do to death, according to the prophecy from Isaiah and the passage from Hebrews? Jesus swallows up death forever. He destroys the one who has the power of death.

Jesus doesn't only lead us to life, he is the source of our life. He is the life because he alone gives us the gift of eternal life. He destroyed the power of death, so that we might live.

I think the Galatians passage sums up how Jesus is our life. (Read.)

By his death and resurrection, Jesus has removed the punishment of sin and destroyed the power of death so that we would no longer be separated from God. And now, as Galatians says, He lives in us and gives us life. Remember that intimate connection with Jesus we talked about earlier in this study when we answered the question about Jesus being the Way? We are one with Christ. If we are apart from Him, we no longer have life. He is our life source.

How about that last part of the question? What is the difference between Jesus being the life and leading to life? It is much like the difference between being the truth and leading to truth. People lead the way to Jesus. Jesus is the source of the life.

Read John 14:7

17. The disciples had never seen the Father. How could they know him?

Well jeepers, if they let us finish reading this passage, we'd get the answer. Jesus addressed this in verses 8-11. (Read, if time.) Come on, Philip. Jeepers.

"Since Jesus himself is God, since the Father and Jesus are in each other (John 14:10; we heard it also in John 10:30, 'I and the Father are one'), and since the disciples knew Jesus, they also knew God the Father in heaven. Even though they are separate 'persons,' Jesus and his Father are still one God. To know one is to know them both.

In the coming days, as the disciples watched Jesus lay down his life as payment for their sins, the disciples would get to know the Father even better. This is the ultimate expression of God's love for us. This reveals the Father's heart of love for us more than anything else."

Closing Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for coming to earth to die for my sins. Lead me ever to look to you as the Way to eternal life, the Truth that gives me eternal life, and as the Life itself. With you I need nothing else.

Amen.