

JESUS IS

How Christ Satisfies
the Deepest Hungers
of our Hearts

DEVOTIONAL

CCBC PRAYER AND FASTING WEEK

Why “Jesus Is”?

One of the distinctive elements of Jesus’ teaching is how he expresses essential truths about his personhood and mission. Unique to the Gospel of John are seven statements that begin with “I am...”

The phrase “I am” reflects Exodus 3:14 where God introduces himself to Moses with the expression “I am who I am.” This statement became a way to connect with God personally and was used throughout Israel’s history to convey that God always was, always is, and always will be.

In this expression, Jesus identifies himself as God and bears God’s presence on Earth.

For Jesus’ first listeners, missing this Old Testament connection was impossible. These metaphorical statements often complemented Jesus’ miracles. The statements that complemented the miraculous acts contributed to the understanding of the other. Each miracle is interpreted by the figurative “I am” statement. Each statement is intended to give meaning that enriches understanding of the ministry of Jesus. They show us that Jesus’ miracles were not just acts of power or mercy, but actions demonstrating his passion to reveal the Father to us and make disciples of all nations who love Him.

The “I am” statements found in the Gospel of John are: **the bread of life** (6:35), **the light of the world** (8:12), **the door** (10:7), **the good shepherd** (10:11, 14), **the resurrection and the life** (11:25), **the way the truth and the life** (14:6), and **the true vine** (15:1).

As we reflect on Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross this Holy Week, there is an “I am” statement for each day. We hope that this will not only be an effective summary of John’s Gospel but also serve as a response to the invitation of Easter that ultimately leads us to the deeper worship of King Jesus!

Acknowledgment: “Jesus Is: How Christ Satisfies the Deepest Hungers of Our Hearts” is adapted from “I AM” Come and See Book Week 8 by The Crossing Church, USA

This week of praying and fasting, may we:

- Be closer to God as we become attuned to our hunger for His presence,
- Find the guidance we need amidst a world of clashing issues we find ourselves in the middle of,
- Break free from spiritual strongholds that hinder us from running after God's purposes for our lives,
- Repent from sinful desires, thoughts, and behaviors, and
- Humble ourselves as a CCBC Family before our loving and holy God.

How to make the most of this devotional guide:

- Set a time and a quiet place for the next 6 days to meet with God as you do devotions for at least 30 minutes.
- Bring your Bible, journal, and this devotional guide.
- Set your mind to worship by singing or being quiet in your heart and mind. Follow CCBC's Spotify account for the worship playlist.
- Pray for God to speak to you as you meditate and pray.
- Read the Scripture passages carefully. Observe and note what words or images resonate with you. Use the reflection questions as a guide.
- Jot down your thoughts. Turn them into prayers. Do the suggested activities and discover other spiritual practices you may not be as familiar with yet that may help us connect with God.
- Gather with your family or set time online or face-to-face with your small group to discuss and encourage one another as we journey together one day at a time.

What is prayer and fasting?

Fasting is a vital part of your life as a Jesus-follower. It's the voluntary abstinence from food or something for a specified duration of time to earnestly seek God or be more intimate with Him. Instead, we use that time to spend reading His Word and praying.

Biblical fasting is not just refraining from eating food, but abstinence from food with a spiritual goal in mind. It goes hand in hand with prayer and is also a form of worship. Luke 2:37 says that fasting is a way of serving God, while Acts 13:2 says that fasting is ministering to God.

“Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly; gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the Lord your God, and cry out to the Lord.”

JOEL 1:14

Throughout history, God has called on His people to humble themselves through prayer and fasting. As a CCBC Family, we practice prayer and fasting to deepen our intimacy with God. Fasting is a spiritual weapon God uses to advance His kingdom, move nations, spark a revival, and ultimately bring victory to His people.

Prayer and fasting are the only disciplines that fulfill the requirements of 2 Chronicles 7:14.

“If My people who are called by My Name humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sins, and heal their land.”

2 CHRONICLES 7:14

When you fast, you will find yourself humbled. You'll discover more time to pray and seek God. As He leads you to recognize and repent of unconfessed sins, you will experience true blessings from God.

Let's begin this fresh season in our CCBC Family life with consecration and being set apart for the Lord and His purposes.



Why Fast

1. God Expects Us to Fast

“And whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance in order to be seen fasting by men. Truly I say to you, they have their renewal in full. But you, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face.”

MATTHEW 6:16-17

Jesus said, “When you fast,” not if you fast. This means that fasting, like prayer, is not an option. Fasting is something that is part of the Christian life.

2. Jesus Fasted

“And after He fasted forty days and forty nights. He then became hungry.”

MATTHEW 4:2

When He began His ministry, Jesus fasted for 40 days. He knew he was going to need spiritual strength to fulfill His purposes. Fasting may make you feel physically weak, but you will become spiritually stronger and more prepared to do God’s work.

3. The Early Church Fasted

“Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”

ACTS 13:3
(SEE ALSO ACTS 14:23)

The church fasted for Saul (Paul) and Barnabas, whom the Holy Spirit had set apart for His mission. Later, Paul and Barnabas appointed leaders in various churches and then fasted and prayed before commending these leaders to the Lord.

4. Fasting Demonstrated Humility Before God

“But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer kept returning to my bosom.”

PSALM 35:13
(SEE ALSO 1 KINGS 21:27-29; EZRA 8:21)

Humility allows you to expect the grace of God, who delights in answering your prayers. When you humble yourself in prayer and turn from your wicked ways, God promises to hear and answer according to His perfect will.

5. Fasting Makes Us Sensitive to the Leading and Power of the Holy Spirit

“And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led about by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days; and when they had ended, He became hungry.”

LUKE 4:1-2

We are prone to forget our priorities. Fasting is a visible reminder that God takes precedence over all our needs. It lifts the matter at hand to God, who can bring about awesome works that bring Him great glory.

6. Fasting Brings About Personal and National Spiritual Revival

“If My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”

2 CHRONICLES 7:14

“I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.”

DANIEL 9:3

Fasting prompts revival to an individual and the country. It brings spiritual and physical healing that will change and prepare us for greater things in God’s kingdom.

7. Fasting is Good for Our Health

Fasting improves our physical condition. Many impurities in the body are burned up when the body is denied food, thus clearing the mind, cleansing, and healing the body. Even people who are underweight and fasting for spiritual purposes have been known to gain weight after completing their fasts. Many Bible teachers say that a 3-day fast is especially beneficial for spiritual cleansing and also for breaking addictive habits.

How to Prepare to Fast

1. Set Your Objective and Commit to a Type of Fast

Why are you fasting? Is it for spiritual renewal, guidance, freedom from spiritual strongholds, repentance, or humility and grace in a difficult season? Ask the Holy Spirit to clarify His leading to know the objectives of your fast. Once you know the reason you have for fasting, you must commit. Pray about the kind of fast you should undertake.

- Choose the type of fast you will commit to (e.g., full fast, water-only fast, one meal per day fast).
- Determine how much time each day will be devoted to prayer and God's word.

2. Be Expectant

Be reminded that the Lord listens to a prayer from the heart. Be true and contrite as you expect results from our God.

3. Prepare Spiritually

The very foundation of fasting is repentance. Unconfessed sin will hinder your prayers. Seek forgiveness from all whom you have offended, and forgive all who have hurt you. Make restitution as the Holy Spirit leads you.

4. Prepare Physically

Adjust and lessen your food intake on days leading up to the prayer and fasting week. During the week, limit your vigorous physical activities. You need to conserve physical energy, and you need to devote more time to prayer and reading the Bible.

5. Be in Faith

Be strong and vigilant in prayer as you dedicate more time to fellowship with God. Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance. Be clear and specific about your faith goals in your personal life, family, finances, church, the country, and the nations. Believe that God is faithful and will answer your prayers.

Different Types of Fasting

Complete fast

- To fast completely from solid and liquid (food and water). Extreme care should be taken, especially for people with underlying medical conditions

Liquid fast

- To have water, juice, or soup only for a period of time

Partial fast

- To eat only certain kinds of food or have just 1-2 meals a day

Object fast

- To fast from specific items like smartphone, gaming console, apps, social media, watching television or Netflix, etc.

Marital fast

- To abstain from physical intimacy for married couples for a period of time (1 Corinthians 7:5)

Caution!

Despite the absolute safety and benefits of fasting, certain persons should not fast without professional supervision. The following may opt for other fasting options:

- Persons who are physically too thin or emaciated
- Persons who are suffering or have a history of anorexia, bulimia, or other eating disorders
- Those who suffer weakness or anemia
- Persons who have tumors, bleeding ulcers, cancer, blood tissues, or who have heart diseases
- Those who suffer chronic problems with kidneys, liver, lungs, heart, or other vital organs
- Individuals who take insulin for diabetes or suffer any other blood sugar problem, such as hyperglycemia
- Women who are pregnant or nursing
- Pre-pubescent children



My Prayer and Fasting Commitments

Day 1 April 14 Fasting Types:

(e.g. partial fast, social media, entertainment, etc.)

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Prayer focus: Personal repentance, change, and spiritual breakthroughs.
Specifically, I want to pray for...

Day 2 April 15 Fasting Types:

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Prayer focus: Family. Specifically, I want to pray for...

Day 3 April 16 Fasting Types:

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Prayer focus: Spiritually lost peers, friends, and family; Workplace or campus. Specifically, I want to pray for...

Day 4 April 17 Fasting Types:

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Prayer focus: CCBC pastors, leaders, volunteers, and ministries. Specifically, I want to pray for...

Day 5 April 18 Fasting Types:

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Prayer focus: The Philippines, government and civic leaders, families and the next generation, and the upcoming midterm elections. Specifically, I want to pray for...

Day 6 April 19 Fasting Types:

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Prayer focus: Missionaries and the global missions work. Specifically, I want to pray for...

Day 7 April 20:

Prayer focus: Personal burdens you want to pray about. Specifically, I want to pray for...

Prayer and Fasting Week Schedule

- **April 13 Sunday:**
 - Preparations
 - Palm Sunday Worship Service
- **April 14 Monday:**
 - Devotion Day 1
 - Fasting
- **April 15 Tuesday:**
 - Devotion Day 2
 - Fasting
- **April 16 Wednesday:**
 - Devotion Day 3
 - Fasting
 - Community Prayer (6:00 PM at CCBC)
- **April 17 Thursday:**
 - Devotion Day 4
 - Fasting
 - Community Prayer (5:00 PM at CCBC)
- **April 18 Friday:**
 - Devotion Day 5
 - Fasting
 - Community Prayer (5:00 PM at CCBC)
- **April 19 Saturday:**
 - Devotion Day 6
 - Breaking of the Fast
- **April 20 Sunday:**
 - Devotion Day 7
 - Easter Worship Service

Day 1

I am the Bread of Life

The moment Jesus said “bread” his listeners would have been transported back 1,300 years into their national history. Each day, during a forty-year exile in the wilderness, God would provide bread from heaven called “manna” to feed the Israelites. This heavenly bread was so big that they celebrated it every year during the Passover meal.

Jesus pointed out in John 6:26-27 that there are two kinds of food: food for the body, which is necessary but not the most important, and food for the inner person—the spirit—which is essential. Neither manna on the journey to the Promised Land in Moses’ time (Exodus 16:13-18) nor loaves in the Promised Land in Jesus’ time (John 6:1-15) could satisfy the core hunger that Jesus came to quench.

The people needed not just food but, ultimately, life, and life is a gift. Jesus’ contrast was that food only sustains life, but Jesus gives eternal life.

Today, more than two thousand years after these words, we’re still starving. There is a hunger that lies within each of us and if we are not careful, we will look to be filled by someone or something that could never satisfy. As with all hunger, the quickest and easiest may not be the best.

C.S. Lewis, in his book *The Weight of Glory*, said, “We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us.” These three may not be what you pursue, but a short reflection on what you are most passionate about most likely will.

Jesus’ bold declaration, “I am the bread of life,” connects the miracle of the loaves and the fish, to the significance of his life purpose. Jesus is the “bread of life” as he nourishes people spiritually and satisfies the deep spiritual longings of their souls. In that sense, those who trust in him shall not hunger; their spiritual longing to know God will be satisfied.

Read:

John 6:25-40

Reflect:

1. When was a time you looked to someone or something that you really thought would satisfy yet left you still wanting more and unsatisfied?

2. If Jesus really satisfies our hunger, why do we resist him?

3. How do you think Jesus, the Bread of Life, can truly satisfy you?

Respond:

What are things you can begin doing today to make sure you stay satisfied with Jesus?

Pray:

Maybe you feel empty today. Or, like a child who's had too much candy, you may ache from being full of the wrong and unhealthy things. Jesus' promise for us today, and every day, is that he will fill us so that we will never be hungry again. He will satisfy us so we will never thirst again. Whether asking to move our affections away from something, or to become more aware of God, spend time asking God for what he promised: the complete satisfaction of your life.

Day 2

I am the Light of the World

The second “I am” statement certainly fits as you read the eleven verses that come before. You can almost hear the words ring out as the sun rises “at dawn” (8:2) in the temple courts. If we were to hear them ourselves, we would undoubtedly have drawn an immediate comparison between Jesus and the sun.

This comparison to the sun is powerful on its own. By referring to himself as the light, Jesus is making a direct claim to being the Messiah (see Isaiah 9:2). The teachers of the law and the others present in the temple court would not have mistaken the meaning of his words.

This is even more evident by the conversion that follows and the emphasis on the word “witness” (8:13, 17, 18). The use of the witness, when about light as it testifies of the sun, who Jesus himself just referred to himself as, is incredible.

Light bears witness to itself. Every day when the sun rises, it tells you it is there. The only people who cannot see the light are those who are blind. If we return to the opening statements of the gospel of John, light and darkness were used as a contrast between belief and unbelief (1:9-13). Jesus was described as “the true light that gives light to everyone” (1:9). There were many who were able to see for the first time that day, and there were many who remained blind, no matter how bright the light was.

To follow Jesus means to believe in and trust him, which leads to, as Jesus himself said, light and life. Those who follow Jesus are like travelers who follow the light on a dark night. You shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life.

The light shows what we could not see and guides our every step. We shall never be left alone as Jesus guides our way. Our part is to follow him, to submit ourselves to his guidance, and to respond to his direction. It is not enough to look at his light and to gaze upon it. We must follow it and walk in it, for it is a light to our feet, not only our eyes.

Read:

John 8:2-20

Reflect:

1. What is the brightest light you have ever seen? What is the darkest dark you have ever experienced? Take note of your emotions and experiences for both. How does this help you connect to Jesus' statement?

2. What promises does Jesus give those who walk in the light?

3. In your relationship with God, what has Jesus shown you that has most impacted the direction of your life? Where or what would you be doing now if you didn't have the clear direction that Jesus gives those who follow him?

Respond:

Is there a specific area of your life that you would like God to bring light to? Maybe an area that feels like it has been in darkness to God or others? Is there something you have been keeping from others in hopes that it never comes to light? What is a step you can take to walk into the light?

Pray:

Often when we pray, we ask God to reveal something to us. In a way, it is asking that God would shine a light to bring perspective to a situation. Jesus is the light of our world. We can hold to that promise today. As we follow him, we will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life. If there is an aspect of your life that you do not understand or are looking for clarity in, ask the light of life to reveal himself, remind you of your identity in him, and the next steps you could take that are consistent with who He is and who you are in him.

Day 3

I am the Door

In his final public address recorded within the Gospel of John, Jesus introduces two “I am” sayings within verses of one another. Growing out of a confrontation with Jewish leaders following their excommunication of a beggar (John 9), Jesus transitions from the image of light and darkness to that of a shepherd and sheep.

The first statement, “I am the door” may seem strange, since it is the only inanimate object of all the “I am” sayings. As we reflect on the image of the door and the verses that surround it, something profound, insightful, and beautiful comes to light.

For many shepherds, the sheepfold (where sheep slept overnight) was attached to their home. So, to enter the sheepfold was to come home. It would be hard to find a more powerful and contrasting analogy following an interaction with a man who was just kicked out by religious leaders. In keeping with light and darkness, the leaders were not able to understand the metaphor Jesus was sharing (10:6). They continued to be blinded by their actions and the people they impacted.

As “the door” Jesus made it explicitly clear: he is the only means of coming home to God. He is the only way one can become part of the people of God. There is no other way. When you go through “the door,” you are home, able to go “in and out” (10:9), where you find an abundant life, complete with fullness and freedom. What an incredible metaphor! Especially for a beggar who found himself alone and in need of a home.

Many of us spend our entire lives searching for this. Either by choosing the wrong door or when we find that what was promised is not what was delivered.

Today, we can walk through the door that Jesus has opened to us. He not only gave his life for us but gives his life to us right now!

Read:

John 10:1-10

Reflect:

1. We have all taken a wrong door. Is there one that is most notable to you? How did going through this door impact your life? Does it influence your perspective when Jesus says, "I am the door"?

2. Is your experience with Jesus an open door to opportunity and life or a closed door of limitation, blocking you from what you desire? Why?

3. Consider how a door is used. It gives access to something, provides a way through a barrier, and prevents danger from the outside. How have you experienced Jesus in this way?

Respond:

Jesus invites us to share in his mission and purpose. If Jesus is the door, how can we open that door to those around us today? When we seek the opportunity, one is provided for us. As God opens a door of opportunity for you, don't miss the chance to open that door for someone else. It may be as simple as an invitation to our Sunday Worship Service or a meal at your home.

Pray:

You can incorporate a breath prayer throughout your day, and it serves as a reminder when you breathe. It is typically 7-9 words. The classic breath prayer is "Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me." Take time to turn this "I Am" statement of Jesus into a breath prayer. It may go like this: "Jesus, doorway to life, my protector and defender." Do not feel constrained by these words; try incorporating the insights you have discovered as you have spent time with this statement.

Day 4

I am the Good Shepherd

For many of us, the image of a shepherd found throughout the Bible can bring confusion since it is not a regular part of our city life. For the original listener, a shepherd had profound cultural and historical implications. Shepherd imagery was common in many parts of the ancient world, with kings and gods described as shepherds.

For the Israelites, shepherds were integral to their origin as a nation and as the people of God (Psalm 23). As “shepherd” became synonymous with political and spiritual leadership, a reference to a good shepherd would serve as a deliberate and scathing criticism of leaders who were failing those they served.

In Ezekiel 34, God reprimands the people he had appointed to be the spiritual protectors and guides for his people, exclaiming that they had only sought to care for themselves and had left the people of God vulnerable and unprotected. This statement resonated again when a healed beggar was thrown out by his protectors and guides.

The word translated in English as “good”, in its original language means “intrinsically good, beautiful, fair.” Not only does Jesus claim that he will be a better guide and protector than those who came before him, but he is also speaking against present leaders. Luke, a physician and historian who speaks about Jesus’ life, quoted Jesus saying: “[Y]ou load people down with burdens that they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them” (Luke 11:46).

Jesus is not only the door that welcomes us home to eternal life, but the one who leads (doesn’t push) us along the way. He gave his life as the greatest demonstration of his love.

As those he loves, we can hear his voice and follow his leadership, knowing he is good. We are not asked to measure up to some impossible standard or earn his approval. He simply asks us to hear and follow, but that decision is ours to make. He will not force it upon us.

Respond:

Make a list of all the characteristics of the shepherd that his passage referenced. What stands out? What are you drawn to? Go through your list one by one, seeking to recall times you have experienced these characteristics in your life. Which ones have you listed as most important to you at this point in your life? Why?

Pray:

As you focus on a specific characteristic of the good shepherd that is most important to you, take this as an opportunity to pray. Set aside time, free from distraction, to hear Jesus speak. His promise is not only that he is good but that we will hear his voice.

Day 5

I am the Resurrection and the Life

As with the other “I am” sayings, this statement occurs close to a miracle performed by Jesus. The resurrection of Lazarus is the only one of its kind and is only recorded within the Book of John. As with the other physical miracles and “I am” sayings, this spectacular moment points beyond the event itself.

The Christian idea of resurrection is different from Greek and Jewish ideas—the two primary cultural influences in Jesus’ time. The Greeks thought of the body as a hindrance to true life and they looked forward to the time when the soul would be free from its shackles. They firmly rejected the idea of resurrection (Acts 17:32). The Jewish people believed in resurrection, that the body would be raised from the dead at the end of time, but without transformation. Something Martha herself says to Jesus (11:24). At its simplest, resurrection is a return to life; life as it should be and was originally intended. Resurrection from the dead and genuine eternal life in relationship with God are so closely tied to Jesus that they are embodied in him and can only be found as we believe in him.

Jesus does not merely say that he will bring about the resurrection or that he will be the cause of the resurrection (both of which are true), but something much stronger: I am the resurrection and the life. Jesus says that he has the power lodged in his own hands and that even the dead will respond to his voice. Jesus only has to say “Lazarus, come out!” and “the dead man came out” (11:43-44). This was not a future event, it was a present reality.

Resurrection can be a concept that we can appreciate from afar. We can know its importance and accept its reality, but never really give time to ponder and sit with it. As the resurrection and the life, Jesus is always writing better stories than we could ever pen. Martha and Mary would soon find this to be true in the most dynamic way. As we continue to reflect on Easter, so will we.

Read:

John 11:17-27

Reflect:

1. What is your biggest fear when it comes to dying? How would you live your life if you were invincible and knew that no matter what happens, you would come back to life?

2. Is there an area of your life that you find it hard to (completely) trust that Jesus understands and can make a difference? Why?

3. Do you believe that Jesus is the resurrection and the life? It is a question that has been carried throughout our study. As the end of our study approaches and the celebration of Easter moves further away, do you believe Jesus is the resurrection and the life?

Respond:

In a time of instant access, we are not built for delay. As followers of Jesus, this is especially true when it is God who does the delaying, as is the case with Lazarus (11:6). Rather than being healed of sickness, Lazarus was raised from the dead! Is there a greater miracle that God is working, a better story God is writing, as you wait? If it helps, write the thoughts and feelings you are experiencing. In doing so, we share with Martha and Mary. May you see the better story God is writing as well.

Pray:

Often when we pray, we feel like our language needs to be perfect, or that there are certain things we cannot say. Martha and Mary expressed deep hurt and pain to Jesus, even frustration over his absence. Jesus himself wept. Turn the situation and feelings listed above into a prayer. One that the resurrection and the life has his ear open to.

Day 6

Day 6: I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life

This section opens and closes with Jesus' admonition, "Let not your heart be troubled" (John 14:1, 27). It's not a surprise that Jesus' friends were troubled. After all, Jesus had announced that He was going to die, one of them was a traitor and then he warned Peter that he was going to deny him three times.

Perhaps the heaviest blow of all was the realization that Jesus was going to leave them (John 13:33). Where was he going? Could they go with him? How could they get where he was going? These were some of the perplexing questions that tumbled around in their minds and hearts and were tossed back and forth in their conversation at the table.

In comforting his disciples, Jesus gives us an extraordinary summary of who he is and what he came from heaven to do on our behalf. In an incredibly concise way, it can encapsulate each of the "I am" statements that have come before it. Even though this verse is most often read at funerals, present relationship, comfort, and security with Jesus are emphasized more than the future. Jesus is preparing us for life long before we face death.

Jesus does not simply teach the way or point the way; he is the way. In fact, "The Way" was one of the earliest names for the Christian faith (Acts 9:2). Who better to show us the way and welcome us home than The Way himself?

He is not one version of the truth; Jesus is the truth. At a time when it can become easy to doubt what is said by most people, Jesus is not only true in every word he says, he is the personification of truth itself. He is true to all who trust in him, as true as truth itself.

Respond:

Take a walk near your home or work. As you walk, try to stay on the sidewalk the entire time. Ask yourself the following: what does this sidewalk provide for me? What does this sidewalk keep me from experiencing? Am I experiencing this sidewalk as negative and restrictive or as good and helpful? How does your experience on your walk mirror your experience of walking in The Way of Jesus? How does it differ?

Pray:

Desiderius Erasmus was originally a Dutch priest who became known as the greatest scholar of the Northern Renaissance during the 1500s. He wrote the following as a prayer based on John 14:6. May it serve you as a guide when you pray today: "O Lord Jesus Christ, you have said that you are the way, the truth, and the life. Help us not to stray from you who are the way, nor to distrust you who are the truth, nor to rest in anything other than you who are the life."

Day 7

I am the True Vine

This is the seventh and last of the “I am” statements of Jesus recorded in the gospel of John. With this one phrase, Jesus presents an extended metaphor (15:1-8) and explains it (15:9-17), which lies at the very heart of the Farewell Discourse (13:31-16:33)—the last words of Jesus to his friends.

Many of us, at one time or another, have walked within the rows of a vineyard. Illustrious trees and a sprawling landscape are the first images that come to mind. Rarely is it a vine. Take for a moment the great humility of Jesus. One who has already been described as life itself, the light of the world, our guide home, the door to eternal life, the resurrection, the life, the way, and the truth, is pleased to speak of himself with low and humble comparisons to a vine.

The cultivation of vineyards was central to the life and economy of Israel. Apart from their use in wine, grapes played an equally important role in the Palestinian diet. As we have seen from the other “I am” statements, Jesus was not introducing something new; it was familiar to every listener.

The centrality of vineyards to Jewish life is a comparison of Jesus’ centrality in our lives. He is the center of our faith—the source of our life. The symbolism of the vine and branches is similar to that of the head and the body; we have a living relationship with Jesus and belong to him. We are unable to live on substitutes!

If Jesus is the true vine, the implication is that there are false vines that we can, or maybe, connected to and continue in. As the true vine, Jesus encourages us to “live, remain, and make your home in me.” This invites us to have an ongoing, active connection to Jesus.

In the same way, a vineyard produces the finest quality fruit as it is cared for and tended, we too produce “fruit” that reflects our connection to Jesus (Galatians 5:22-23). We become even more like him.

Read:

John 15:1-8

Reflect:

1. What do you do to maintain important relationships in your life? Is this transferable in how you maintain your relationship with Jesus?

2. What are the practices you put into your life that help you maintain your connection to Jesus? Which spiritual disciplines from this study have you added? Which could you add?

3. Purging is trending in homes around the country, as people are finding areas of excess and intentionally limiting themselves. With the metaphor of the vine, this would be considered pruning. How can you prune your life to bring more focus and clarity, especially as it relates to knowing Jesus?

Respond:

Wait until the end of your day before completing this section. As a response, how were you able to draw strength from Jesus today? Were you able to create an active dependence on Jesus by staying connected to him? What helped you? What hindered you? In light of these responses, what can be different tomorrow? Commit to taking one step toward that being true.

Pray:

There may not be a better prayer to pray as we conclude our study of the book of John, along with the “I am” statements, and Easter than to allow the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus to be part of our daily lives. Write each of the “I Am” statements down, and as you look into each of them, form them into a prayer of your own. Apart from him, we can do nothing. With him, we have all we need.



Breaking the Fast

1. End Your Fast Gradually

Depending on your type of fast, it is not ideal to eat solid food immediately after you fast. Abrupt reintroduction of solid food to your stomach and digestive tract will likely have negative, even dangerous, consequences. Try several snacks and smaller meals. If you end your fast gradually, the beneficial physical and spiritual effects will result in continued good health.

2. Continue to Pray

Build from the momentum you gained during the fast. Let it transform your prayer and devotional life. Practice and discipline yourself with the habit of prayer throughout the year.

3. Pursue Greater Intimacy with God

When you sincerely humble yourself before the Lord, and as you consistently meditate on His Word, you will experience a heightened awareness of His presence and hand at work (John 14:21). A regular fast has been greatly rewarding to many Christians. Some do them every week.

4. Experience the Joy of God's Presence

Bask in the fullness of joy in the Lord as you abide in His glorious presence.

