

The “I Am” Sayings of Jesus

Who Is Jesus?

Introduction

As we begin our series on the “I Am” sayings of Jesus in John’s Gospel, let’s take a step back to reflect on John’s purpose in writing his Gospel. Many commentators have said that these seven “I Am” claims form the structure of John’s overall narrative. Assuming this is true, understanding John’s purpose in writing his gospel will help us understand the “I Am” sayings themselves, since they embody John’s theme.

Read John 20:30-31.

- 1: **These verses form John’s “thesis” or “purpose statement” for this Gospel. What do you think John wants us to take away from reading this book?**

- 2: **Do you believe that you have eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ?**

- 3: **How would you like your faith and walk with Jesus to grow as you study these parts of John’s Gospel?**

Read John 1:1-18

- 4: **What about Jesus does John’s introduction focus on?**

- 5: **How does John communicate that Jesus is God?**

- 5: **What might calling Jesus “The Word” teach us about Jesus?**

- 6: **According to verses 14–18, what does Jesus do when he comes to us?**

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7: List the 8 “I Am” sayings in John’s Gospel:

- John 6:35, 48
- John 8:12
- John 8:58
- John 10:7
- John 10:11
- John 11:25
- John 14:6
- John 15:1

8: Which of these statements is the easiest for you to understand? Which is the most confusing?

9: Discuss this quote from C. S. Lewis,

“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: “I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.” That is the one thing we must not say. A man who said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” (Mere Christianity, p. 56)

Closing Thoughts

John’s Gospel highlights that Jesus is someone unique. Of all the people in the world, even among the great religious thinkers, Jesus stands as unique. First, Jesus is unique because he claimed to be—and indeed was—both fully God and fully man. He existed as “the Word” long before he became a human being by birth through Mary. Jesus is also unique because he is “the only-begotten Son of God.” He has a unique relationship with God the Father. We may call God “our Father,” but we are his creatures, adopted into his family. Jesus is not a creature; he is the Creator. Jesus is not adopted; he is essentially one with the Father.

By virtue of these two facts (among many), Jesus has a unique ability to tell us about God. He has the unique ability to show us the way to God, tell us the truth about God, and give us life in God. In fact, Jesus says he came to give us life, and that abundantly (John 10:10). All of these “I Am” claims by Jesus are variations on this theme.

If Jesus is true—if he is right about himself—then that should have a major impact on the way we view ourselves, God, and Jesus. It should cause major changes in the way we do life. But one thing should become clear: we can’t approach Jesus as though he were just a good, religious teacher. His claims are far too absurd to be someone we can take moral advice from. He is either telling the truth, and our lives need to revolve around him. Or he is grossly distorting the truth, and we ought to totally dismiss him.

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I Am the Bread of Life

John 6:22-59

Introduction

Jesus’s first “I Am” statement follows immediately on the heels of his miracle of feeding the five thousand by the Sea of Galilee. One of the main reasons the crowd tracked Jesus down in Capernaum was because he had given them a free meal (6:26 and 6:30–31). If following Jesus meant free food, they were all in! How about you? Why do you follow Jesus?

Read John 6:22-59

- 1: The exchange between Jesus and the Jewish crowd reveals that people were not seeking Jesus for the right reasons. What does Jesus say is the *real reason* the people were seeking him out? (6:26)**

- 2: How about today? What might be some poor reasons people pursue or follow Jesus?**

- 3: What do you think Jesus is getting at when he challenges his followers to labor for food that endures to eternal life? (v. 27)**

- 4: When Jesus says “I am the bread of life,” (vv. 35, 48), what do you think he is saying about himself?**

- 5: God’s provision of “manna” in the wilderness (Ex. 16) comes up a number of times in this passage. What is the connection between the manna and Jesus? (Deut. 8:2–3; John 6:48-51)**

- 6: What other “breads” do we look to in life? That is, what do you consume to make you feel better? What things or activities can seem more “life-giving” to you than Jesus?**

- 7: How do we eat this bread of life? (Compare 6:28–29, 35, 40, and 51.)**

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8: What does Jesus say will happen to those who come to him? (v. 35) Does this mean we will never experience physical hunger or thirst again?

What, then, do you think Jesus means? (See 6:40, 50–51, 54–58.)

9: How can we eat the bread of life on a daily basis?

Closing Thoughts

In John 6, Jesus challenges us over our very reasons for following him. Do we believe in Jesus just for the stuff he gives us? Are we following Jesus because we think that, if we do, he will give us a happy marriage? Or, a comfortable life? Or, a positive spiritual experience? Are we only following Jesus for the *blessings* he can give, or are we following Jesus because he *himself* is our greatest joy and satisfaction?

If we are honest with ourselves, we use many “bread substitutes” to sustain our way through life. Jesus isn’t as satisfying as we would like him to be. He seems disconnected from our daily routines. It’s easier to rely on peer approval, personal accomplishments, a healthy savings account, or a pint of ice cream to “give us life.” However, when we rely on these things for encouragement, comfort, identity, or worth, what we are really engaging in is what the Bible calls “idolatry.”

Tim Keller writes in *Counterfeit Gods*, “An idol is whatever you look at and say, in your heart of hearts, ‘If I have that, then I’ll feel my life has meaning, then I’ll know I have value, then I’ll feel significant and secure. ... When anything in life is an absolute requirement for your happiness and self-worth, it is essentially an ‘idol,’ something you are actually worshipping” (xviii).

I think all of us are idolaters at some level. The wonderful thing about Jesus is that he comes to us and says, “I’m right here. Drop your idols. Take those gross ‘bread substitutes’ out of your mouths and feed on me. Believe in me.” Every day we have the chance to feed on Christ by believing in him all over again. We believe by praying to him, by reading his word, by trusting him, by following where he leads us, and doing whatever he gives us to do. We feed on Christ by remembering that he died on the cross for our sins, even for our idolatry. We feed on Christ by faith when we take communion with the church. We share the bread with others when we share the gospel.

When we do these things, we find that eternal life is not just something in the future. Eternal life is a reality that we experience in the here and now. Eternity is here. It is within you. Resurrection is something that has already begun. For “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come,” (2 Cor. 5:17).

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I Am the Light of the World

John 8:12-20

Introduction

Jesus’s second “I Am” statement takes place during the Feast of Booths (tents). This was a festival commemorating the Israelites’ journey through the wilderness during the Exodus. Both they and God (through the “Glory Cloud”) lived in tents for forty years. During that time, the fiery presence of God was the Israelites’ guiding light. In today’s lesson, we will see how Jesus is our guiding light. Are we really following him, though?

Read John 8:12-20.

- 1: What images or emotions do the experiences of “light” and “darkness” bring to mind?**

- 2: In other philosophies and religions, what does it mean to be “enlightened”?**

- 3: What do the images of darkness and light represent in the Bible? (Survey the following passages.)**
 - Genesis 1:2-5
 - Exodus 10:21; 13:21
 - Psalm 74:20
 - Psalm 27:1; Psalm 104:2; 1 Timothy 6:16
 - Isaiah 9:2
 - Joel 2:31; Matthew 24:29
 - Matthew 25:30, 27:45
 - Luke 8:17
 - Acts 26:18
 - 2 Corinthians 4:4; 6:14
 - Revelation 21:23-24; 22:5

- 4: How do you feel about bright light when you have been in the dark for a long time (for example, asleep)? How does this relate to our spiritual condition? (See John 3:19-20.)**

- 5: When Jesus says, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life,” what is Jesus saying about himself?**

- 6: What does darkness represent in this statement? What do you think it means to “walk in darkness”?**

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7: Why can it be hard to realize you are spiritually blind? What are some areas in your social or spiritual life where you think you might be blind?

8: When you feel lost, sad, or confused, what “guiding lights” do you look to? What might be the danger of having guiding lights besides Jesus? (See Luke 6:39.)

9: How do we walk in the light as He is in the light? (See 1 John 1:5-10, 2:9-10; Psalm 119:105.)

10: What is the result of walking in the light? (1 John 1:7)

Closing Thoughts

When Jesus says, “I am the light of the world,” Jesus is saying he is more than a good teacher. He is not merely *a* light in the world. He is *the* light of the world. By identifying himself with this image, Jesus is drawing our attention all the way back to the Exodus (and before that to the creation of the world). In the wilderness, God led his people by means of a flaming cloud that was their guiding light. This light never disappeared; it was constant. It stayed with God’s people throughout their whole journey. Even when they were disobedient and God punished them in the wilderness, the glorious light of God’s presence never left them. The light of the world does not forsake those who follow him.

This is why the theme of our study through these “I Am” sayings is “I AM with You.” Jesus is the glory of God, and he promises to never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). The light of the world, the light that gives light to all, is the God-man who dwells with his people. He gives sight to the blind. He gives understanding to the dumb. He gives wisdom to the foolish. And, he gives eternal life to the sinner. This is Jesus. Jesus is committed to his people. He is committed to us.

Immediately following Jesus’s “I Am” discussion with the Jewish people in John 8, we see a miracle. In this miracle, Jesus heals a blind man. He spits in some dirt, makes mud, covers the man’s eyes in it, and tells him to go wash it off. When he does, the man suddenly regains his sight. This man had never seen before—he was blind from birth. Here’s the point of that miracle: Jesus is able to give sight to the blind. He is able to take people who are walking in darkness and give them the ability to see. This means that Jesus really is the light of the world—and that he is able to give light to you and me.

If you feel like you are stumbling around in the darkness, then turn to Jesus. He is the light, and he gives light to everyone who asks for it. He gives grace, wisdom, understanding, healing, and eternal life. We live in a crazy time right now, and we don’t know what tomorrow will hold. Look to Jesus. He is a stable, faithful guiding light. He is our north star, our lighthouse, when all around us is dark.

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Before Abraham Was, I Am

John 8:31-59

Introduction

Today we come to the most confrontational and challenging of Jesus’s “I Am” sayings. It was so controversial that the Jewish crowd picked up stones to throw at Jesus, because they thought he was blaspheming. The deeper we go into these statements, the more we ourselves are confronted with the question, “Is Jesus just something that I add onto my life? Or, is he someone that I build my whole life around?” Who Jesus *actually* is makes all the difference in who Jesus *should be* to you and me.

Read John 8:31-59.

- 1: **What do you think it means to be enslaved? What are some things that you might be “enslaved” by? (Think about circumstances you feel trapped by, or things you wish you didn’t care so much about.)**

- 2: **What does Jesus say is true for everyone who commits sin? (v. 34)**

- 3: **Name one sin in your life that you feel has some level of mastery over you.**

- 4: **What is the secret to finding true freedom from slavery to sin? (vv. 31–32, 36)**

- 5: **How do the Jewish people react to Jesus’s statement, “the truth will set you free”? (v. 33) What about their history makes this statement a bit ironic?**

- 6: **In verses 37–47, Jesus discusses the “Spiritual Paternity” of his Jewish audience. Who do the Jews claim as their father? Who does Jesus say their father actually is?**

- 7: **How does their *real* spiritual paternity show itself? (vv. 44, 47)**

- 8: **Jesus brings this conversation to a head in verse 56–59. What does he say about himself there? How do the Jews respond?**

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Read Exodus 3:1-15.

9: Who was Moses talking to in the burning bush? (Ex. 3:2–4)

10: How did this figure identify himself? (3:6; 13–15)

11: What does the name “I AM” reveal about God’s nature and character?

12: In light of Exodus 3, what is Jesus saying about himself in John 8:58? Who is he saying that he is?

13: In the same vein, how does this help us understand the Jews’ response to Jesus? (John 8:59)

14: What comfort is there in believing that Jesus is the God of the Old Testament and the Angel of the Lord who appeared in the burning bush?

Closing Thoughts

In Matthew 7:21 Jesus says, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven...” In that place, Jesus makes clear that many people claim to know him, but at the end of the day, they don’t care to do his will. They add Jesus on as a spiritual perk to their religious lives, but they aren’t really interested in who he is or what he has done. In the same way, Jesus makes clear that not everyone who identifies as a person of faith, or a church member, or a Christian has that identity *spiritually*. Here were Jewish people, followers of Jesus, schooled in their Bibles, whom Jesus called spawn of Satan. That thought should terrify us.

It should terrify us because we really aren’t all that different from them. We are sinners, too, just like them. Like them we are slaves of our sin. As we saw in the last lesson, we are blind to our sin. We are deaf to the truth. We would rather pretend that we are basically good people than admit to the truth. Masks are easier to wear than vulnerability. Lies feel safer than honesty.

There is only one solution to the problem of our slavery to sin and blindness to the truth. Jesus must deliver us from this slavery and give us the light of his truth. Only in knowing the truth can we find freedom. Only in following Jesus can we make this *exodus* from our slavery to sin and the devil. But the great news is, we aren’t the first people Jesus has had to deliver from slavery. He is *The Angel of the LORD* who delivered the Israelites from slavery, too. He is a miracle-worker, a promise-keeper, a light in the darkness. This is who Jesus is.

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I Am the Good Shepherd

John 10:1-30

Introduction

The fourth “I Am” statement of John’s Gospel takes place once again during the Feast of Tabernacles (or “booths”), shortly following Jesus’s healing of the blind man (John 9). Recall that this festival was a commemoration of God’s guiding his people through the wilderness to the “good pasture” of the Promised Land—a land flowing with milk and honey. It is in this context that Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd.” He is the one promised by God to lead us into eternal rest.

Read John 10:1-30

- 1: **When might it be important to *follow* someone? What might happen if you don’t follow carefully?**

- 2: **The metaphor of God as a shepherd is common in the Old Testament. What passages can you think of where God is described as a shepherd?**

- 3: **Take a look at Ezekiel 34:11–24. Who is Jesus claiming to be based on this prophecy?**

- 4: **According to John 10:25–27, why do the Pharisees not believe Jesus?**

- 5: **This raises an interesting question: how do we know if we are Jesus’s sheep?**

- 6: **What is the biggest difference between those who *are* Jesus’s sheep and those who are *not*? (See vv. 3–5, 25–27)**

- 7: **What do you think it means to “hear” Jesus’s voice? How can we grow in our ability to hear him?**

- 8: **In verses 8–13, Jesus contrasts himself with two people dangerous to the sheep: the thief and the hired hand. What are their distinguishing marks? Who was Jesus talking about?**
 - The thief:
 - The hired hand:

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9: How does Jesus describe himself in comparison to these other two figures?

- Verses 2–4:
- Verse 11:
- Verse 14:
- Verse 28:

10: What is the primary mark of the Good Shepherd? (v. 11)

11: What about this relationship between the Good Shepherd and his sheep is unique or ironic?

12: What is the “Promised Land” that Jesus is leading us to, and how does he get us there? (v. 28)

Closing Thoughts

All of us are following someone. It may be a friend, a parent, or a coach. There is someone we look to for advice and protection. Yet, we like to be the one who gets to make the final decision about what we do. If we want to follow Jesus, however, we have to let go of that need to be in control. Jesus calls us to depend on him completely and follow him fully. This may mean that Jesus brings us to places we don't really want to go.

Nonetheless, wherever Jesus takes us, he will take care of us. “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me” (Psalm 23:4). “For we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, and for those who are called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28). Part of the reason we know that Jesus will take care of us through the dark places is because he has taken a dark path himself. His defining mark as our good shepherd is that he was willing to die for us. The good shepherd laid down his life for his sheep. “But God demonstrates his own love for us in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

This is the opposite of the way man naturally thinks. Shepherds and priests make sacrifices of the sheep. The sheep is supposed to die for man's sins. But here in the gospel, Jesus—the good shepherd and high priest—dies for the sins of the sheep. The relationship is inverted and counter-intuitive. The strong gives life to the weak rather than the weak being consumed by the strong.

The only way to benefit from Christ's grace here—the only way to benefit from the saving work of Jesus' death—is to admit we are weak. “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:31–32). How about you? Do you hold onto your “goodness” or your “strength”? Do you hold onto your own ability to figure life out? If you do, you won't ever really be ready to follow Jesus and listen for his voice.

The “I Am” Sayings of Jesus

I Am the Resurrection and the Life

John 11:17-44

Introduction

Our story today begins weaving together the various threads we have seen in Jesus’s “I AM” sayings. In the story of Lazarus, we begin to see what it means to have the great I AM as a part of our lives. We begin to see what it means to have him shepherd, guide, and protect, what it means for him to be the light in our dark world, and what it means for him to give us the bread of eternal life. Jesus’s raising of Lazarus from the dead reveals that *he is who he says he is, and more.*

Read John 11:1–44

- 1: **What was Jesus’s attitude towards Lazarus and his sisters? (v. 5)**

- 2: **When Jesus heard that Lazarus was ill, what was his response? (v. 6) What was the consequence of this decision? (vv. 11 & 17)**

- 3: **How can we reconcile the two facts that Jesus *loved* Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, and he *allowed* Lazarus to die?**

- 4: **What is Martha and Mary’s response to Jesus when they see him? What does this tell you about how they felt? (vv. 21 & 32)**

- 5: **How did Jesus respond to Martha and Mary? How can his responses give you comfort when you suffer?**

- 6: **What does Martha think Jesus is talking about when he says, “Your brother will rise again”? (vv. 23-24)**

- 7: **What do you think Jesus is claiming when he says, “I am the resurrection and the life”?**

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8: How does Jesus react when he sees Mary weeping and Lazarus’ tomb? (vv. 33-38)

9: Why was Jesus so upset? What difference do you think there was between his weeping and everyone else’s, if any?

10: How does Martha respond when Jesus tells the people to open the tomb? How does Jesus answer her? (vv. 39–40)

11: What does raising Lazarus tell us about Jesus’ power and identity?

12: How does this story help us understand God’s purposes in suffering and tragedy?

Closing Thoughts

Depending on your age and experiences in life, you may not have a lot of grief or sorrow to look back on. You may not have had someone close to you die. You may not have experienced abuse or mistreatment or bullying. You may not have ever been deeply betrayed. But one day you will. One day, all of us will have more sorrow than we ever imagined. Because we live in a fallen world.

The story of Lazarus teaches us that it is not God’s will to remove us from this fallen, sorrowful world. It is not his plan for us to escape painful experiences. Rather, it is God’s plan to join us in sorrow. He remains with us in pain. As we read in Psalm 23, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” In Isaiah 43, God promises, “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you.”

The promise of God to his faithful followers is not, “Follow me and do as I say, and you will have a blessed, comfortable life.” Rather, it’s, “If you trust me and follow where I lead, I will never leave you. No matter how dark the road gets, no matter how sorrowful and alone you feel, I will never leave you or forsake you.”

As I have grown older and seen too many people I love die, I have come to realize that the great comfort of the gospel is not merely that Jesus died on the cross to forgive my sins. It’s that the Jesus who died on the cross to forgive my sins sits on the throne of heaven. He’s in control. Death is under his power. And whatever happens, whatever sorrows and difficulties providence throws at me, he will guide me through it.

The “I Am” Sayings of Jesus

I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life

John 14:1-14

Introduction

This week, we meet Jesus and the Apostles in the upper room on the night of Judas’s betrayal. We call this section (chapters 13 through 17) Jesus’s “upper room discourse.” It’s his last opportunity to teach the disciples before he goes to the cross—and it’s where we find Jesus’s last two “I Am” statements. In this lesson, Jesus brings everything he has taught us about truth and life to center on himself. His claims are personal, absolute, and exclusive. He wants us to center our whole lives in him. Have you?

Read John 14:1-14

- 1: **Have you ever had to say goodbye to a good friend? Describe that here:**

- 2: **Jesus begins this passage saying, “Let not your hearts be troubled.” Look at John 13:31–38. Why might the disciples have been anxious?**

- 3: **What perspective does Jesus give his disciples to help them through his coming departure? (vv. 2-4)**

- 4: **How can this perspective help you and me deal with our own anxieties and fears?**

- 5: **Look at verse 5. What was Thomas confused about? How can you relate to Thomas’s feelings?**

- 6: **How does Jesus respond to Thomas? (vv. 6-7) What do you think Jesus means?**

- 7: **What might it mean for Jesus to be the WAY?**

- 8: **What might it mean for Jesus to be the TRUTH?**

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9: What might it mean for Jesus to be the LIFE?

10: How might Jesus’s claims in verse 6 challenge the ways you think and go about life?

11: Discuss this common Hindu parable about approaching God and/or truth:

A group of blind men once heard that an elephant had been brought to their town, but none of them had any experience with one. None were aware of its form or nature. Out of curiosity, they said: “Let us go and inspect it by touch and find out what manner of creature this is.” So, they sought it out, and when they found it they groped about it. The man whose hand landed on the trunk said, “This elephant is like a thick snake.” Another’s hand reached up to the ear, and it seemed like a fan to him. The one who found its leg said, “The elephant is a pillar—like a tree-trunk.” The blind man who placed his hand upon its side said, “The elephant is like a leathery wall.” Another, feeling its tail, described it as a rope. The last man felt its tusk, coming to the conclusion that the elephant is hard, smooth, and like a spear.

12: What does the exclusive, close relationship Jesus has with his Father mean for us? (vv. 12–14)

Closing Thoughts

Nearly everything Jesus claims in our passage today runs counter to the way intelligent Postmoderns think about things. We live in a pluralistic, relativistic, inclusive culture. We think everyone should be free to make their own choices about spirituality, and they should be accepted whatever their choices. Our neighbors are hostile to any claims of absolute truth or exclusive spirituality. Our culture wants God to be okay with everyone and everything—so long as, you know, people are sincere, accepting, and loving.

Unfortunately, Jesus isn’t what anybody wishes he were. We all—at some level—want to think that Jesus is just like us. He likes the things we like, and he hates the things we hate. He is inclusive and affirming of people like us, but hostile, or at least irritated, towards people who don’t think like we do. Again, Jesus isn’t like us. He’s not on anyone’s side but his Father’s. His claims are so true, absolute, and *real* that we are the ones in trouble if we don’t line up our perspectives with his.

However, Jesus doesn’t make these claims in John 14 to cause us to fear. He’s not speaking to condemn our worldviews. Rather, he’s calling us to faith, to find comfort in walking with him. Yes, he is the only one who can give us eternal life. Yes, he is the only way to really get your head around the truth. Yes, life can only be found in him. But most importantly, Jesus offers himself to you freely. There’s no toll for walking across the bridge Jesus makes between us and the Father. There’s no admission fee for the truth. There’s no tax on the life he gives us. It’s all free. All you have to do is believe it, walk it, and enjoy it.

The “I Am” Sayings of Jesus

I Am the Vine. You are the Branches

John 15:1-17

Introduction

Today we come to the last of Jesus’s “I am” statements. Once again we are in the upper room with his disciples before his crucifixion. Christ’s desire is that we find our life, our abundance, and our joy in him. We do that through “abiding” in him, like fruit-bearing branches cling to a healthy vine. Jesus also wants us to “bear fruit” in our lives. We aren’t saved for our own comfort, but to produce something good and life-giving in the world. How about you? Are you abiding in Christ and producing good fruit?

Read John 15:1-17

- 1: **How do you think we become better, stronger Christians?**

- 2: **What does the image of the vineyard represent in the book of Isaiah? (See Isaiah 5:1–7 and 27:2–6).**

- 3: **What might Jesus be saying about himself as it relates to this Old Testament image?**

- 4: **What is the Father’s role as it relates to the vine, and what does that mean he does with the vine? (John 15:2)**

- 5: **What is the purpose of pruning a plant, and how is it done?**

- 6: **What does this idea of pruning communicate about what God does to us believers? How have you seen God “pruning” you?**

- 7: **How does the image of a vine and branches help us understand what it means to “abide in Christ”? (vv. 4–5)**

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8: According to Jesus, how do we bear fruit in the Christian life? What type of fruit do you think Jesus is talking about? (vv. 4-5)

9: Have you ever felt your own inability to love God or other people the right way, or felt powerless to do the right thing? How does verse 5 help us address that feeling?

10: Jesus mentions three practical ways of abiding in him. Describe them, and write down the result of abiding in Jesus in each way.

- v. 7
- vv. 9–11
- vv. 12, 16–17

11: Do you think fruit-bearing is something Jesus sees Christians doing on their own or with others?

12: What is the relationship between fruit-bearing and discipleship? (v. 8) What might we conclude if we aren't bearing fruit?

Closing Thoughts

Faithful Christians are fruitful Christians. There's no such thing as a fruitless Christian life—or a Christian who never grows. If the Spirit of Christ dwells in you, then you are alive and growing, part of God's new creation, and part of his family (Rom. 8:9–17). That means you must bear fruit. How can a healthy apple tree *not* produce apples? If you aren't growing and bearing fruit, then you are either not a healthy Christian, or you are not really a Christian at all. It's as simple as that.

There's also no such thing as a lone-wolf Christian. A Christian who cuts themselves off from Christian community is a Christian who cuts themselves off from Christ. The love of such a Christian grows cold, they lose touch with the Holy Spirit, and they shrivel up inside. It's been said that growth in Christ is always growth together. It is in the community of the church that *obeying* Christ's commandments is really experienced, enjoyed, and encouraged. It's the focal point of Christian love.

But all these things are pointless discussions if we aren't personally and deeply drawing on the riches and grace of Christ Jesus. Trying to produce good fruit by our own efforts is like trying to turn an oak into an apple tree by tying apples to its branches. After a while, the fruit will rot. First the tree must change, then it will bear fruit. As we conclude, once more let me challenge you to find your life-source and joy-source in Jesus. Let his love and grace nourish you. Find your everything in him. If you do, the rest will follow. Go in peace.