



Materials for lifegroup use & personal reflection

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Quoteable quotes

"The thief comes to steal, kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives His life for the sheep." John 10:10-11

"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." CS Lewis

"The moment God is figured out with nice neat lines and definitions, we are no longer dealing with God." AW Tozer

"The gospel is absurd and the life of Jesus is meaningless unless we believe that He lived, died, and rose again with but one purpose in mind: to make brand-new creation." Brennan Manning

"Christianity is not about building an absolutely secure little niche in the world where you can live with your perfect little wife and your perfect little children in your beautiful little house where you have no gays or minority groups anywhere near you. Christianity is about learning to love like Jesus loved and Jesus loved the poor and Jesus loved the broken." Rich Mullins

"A dead Christ I must do everything for;
a living Christ does everything for me." Andrew Murray



Jesus according to Jesus

'Who are you' is a popular song by The Who and the title track of CSI New York, a programme based around forensic policing where they piece together fragments of a crime scene in order to complete the story or discover the identity of the person who has died. **Who am I is a question that often haunts us at different times in our lives.** It's the typical teenage crisis when seeking to understand where they fit in the world and today is even more complicated for them as gender identity is apparently up for grabs. Who am I is also a question asked by those who are experiencing loss. Who am I now that I am a widow/widower? Who am I, now that I am retired? Who am I now, that I am separated or divorced? Who am I now, that I have been made redundant? **Who am I now that... For each of us the context of asking this question is different.**

When I am doing adoption assessments, I ask my prospective adopters to describe themselves, not in terms of their personality, but their identity; 'I am.' It often proves difficult as to what comes first – my relational status, my job, my ethnicity, my sexuality, my religion, my hobbies, football affiliations or... what? What happens when one of those changes? How would you describe your identity?

Over the next seven weeks we are going to be looking at the identity of Christ – 'Jesus according to Jesus'; what Jesus says about Himself; His 'I am' statements. One of the things I have noticed is that Jesus doesn't just tell us who He is in words; He shows us who He is by His actions and behaviour. He doesn't just say 'I am the Bread of Life', for example, He fed the 5,000; He doesn't just say 'I am the Light of the World', He gave a blind man his sight and He doesn't just say, 'I am the Resurrection and the Life' He raised Lazarus from the dead and rose from the dead Himself. For me, these 'I am's' are deeply encouraging and deeply challenging; they give hope and joyous expectation that God is indeed enough in every situation you and I might find ourselves in, but they challenge me literally to the core of my being about who I am and whether my behaviour and action positively supports that. **Whilst the context for each of us is different when we ask the question 'Who am I' for those of us who are Christians, the answer is always the same. We are His!** His son, His daughter, His beloved child, His died-for-one. Where you need clarity and clear vision, may He be your Light and your Way; where you are struggling as a Christian may you know His feeding and the invitation to abide; where you are lost may you know Him to be the Good Shepherd who comes looking for you; when you question where truth is may you know Him to be the truth that sets you free from the lies of the world or the untruths you have been told about yourself and, where there are situations that seem dead or impossible, may you know His resurrection power. As Alec Motyer said, "Whatever our need, Jesus says to us 'I am that, I am'" Whether we need a friend – Jesus says "I am that, I am," or a healer - He says "I am that, I am": He is the answer to our deepest needs!

Jesus knew who He was – you and I can be confident too of our identity in Him because He was, is and always will be, who He says He is.



John 6 v 22-51.

'I am the bread of life'

Week One

Light is a source of illumination: it permeates every crack and makes everything clear. Everyday the sun brings light in the day and the moon and stars light at night, bringing energy for growth and for life to exist. Jesus as the light of the world offers a choice between the darkness of sin and the light of life in His presence. Darkness can't exist when light comes!

1. This is a familiar passage; read it in two different versions of the Bible and spend some time in quiet just asking God to reveal Himself to you. What immediately comes to mind?
2. V25 – When the crowd ask Jesus 'when did you come here?' they are not asking about his timing or mode of transport, they are asking where He is from, where He was born, who His Father is? Think back, what was the first question you ever asked Jesus?
3. V30 These scriptures follow after Jesus' feeding the five thousand and Jesus walking on the water but the crowd still asks for a sign, in order to believe. What caused us to come to Christ?
4. v32 There is a difference between feeding the stomach and feeding the soul; what feeds your soul?
5. This is the first of the 'I am' statements; it is the covenant name of God, Yahweh revealed to Moses at the burning bush: Exodus 3 v 14. By equating Himself with bread, Jesus is saying that He is essential to life. What is 'essential' to us about our faith? What can't we do without?
6. v35-40, 51 speaks of Jesus identity and mission; His purpose is to satisfy the will of God rather than human desire. What is our identity and calling?
7. v36 There is always an invitation to 'come and believe'; the challenge for us all is 'seeing' but not 'believing'. The Jews saw, but grumbled; they questioned who Jesus said He was. How do we 'come' and 'abide', 'believe' and 'bond'.
8. In John 4, Jesus banishes spiritual thirst for the woman at the well; in John 6 He banishes spiritual hunger. What are the needs in society today and the attempts to satisfy hunger and thirst? What satisfies ours?
9. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:5 . What makes us children of the light?
10. In COVID what has 'fed and watered you'? What might we do differently in future as a result?
11. What is your takeaway from this passage?

Point to ponder

Coming to Jesus involves choice – choosing to forsake the world and follow Him, choosing to speak out like Esther, choosing 'defiant joy' regardless of our circumstances, choosing to look up as the Psalmist did. Do we believe that Jesus is who He says He is, that He will do what He has said He will do and that He is the only one who can?

Quotable quotes

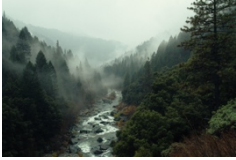
"The challenge for us is *not* that we see Jesus with our eyes and believe in ideas about Jesus. The challenge for us is to see which things perish and which things endure ... only the things that endure can truly satisfy and only the things that endure bring true life." David Ewart

Jesus makes sure the crowds are fed. It is ethically responsible to care for the body before nurturing the soul". Gary Burge.

"Before a man can seek God, God must have first sought him." AW Tozer

"At the root of unbelief is not a lack of evidence but an attitude that wants to tell God how to run the universe or at least my corner of it". JWD

The doctrine which leaves salvation to the creature and tells him that it depends upon himself is the exaltation of the flesh and a dishonouring of God. But that which puts in Gods hand man, fallen man and tells man that though he has destroyed himself, yet his salvation must be of God; that doctrine humbles man in the very dust and then he is just in the right place to receive the grace and mercy of God. It is a humbling doctrine". CH Spurgeon.



John 8 v 12-21

'I am the light of the world'

Week Two

1. This is a familiar passage; read it in two different versions of the Bible and spend some time in quiet just asking God to reveal Himself to you. What immediately comes to mind?
2. Light is a common biblical theme in both the Old and New Testaments. Look at the following OT scriptures – why is light important and what does it tell us about the character of God? Gen 1 v 3, Exodus 13 v 21-22, Psalm 119 v 105, Isaiah 9 v 2, Isaiah 60 v 19-20.
3. John refers to Jesus as 'light' – John 1 v 4, John 1 v 9-10, John 8 v 12, I John 1 v 5. What does this mean for us?
4. William Holman Hunt painted a famous picture of Jesus standing at a door with a lantern in His hand, as we think about this picture what do we see?
5. In John's gospel Jesus has just forgiven the woman caught in adultery (John 8 v 1-8) casting light on the Pharisees motives and, in John 9 v 1-12, He heals a blind man therefore giving both physical as well as spiritual light. Why is the context of the passage important? What does it add to our understanding of Jesus claim?
6. Jesus was speaking in the part of the temple where the offerings were placed and candles burned to symbolize the pillar of fire that led the people of Israel through the wilderness (Ex 13 v 21-22); what did the pillar represent then and what does Jesus mean now?
7. The contrast between light (Greek word PHOS meaning 'the light, anything emitting light') and darkness (SKOTIA meaning 'darkness due to the want of light') v 12. Where do we need the light of Christ to shine?
8. What are the truths that Jesus reveals about God in this passage and about ourselves?
9. v20 Comment about God's timing – in what ways do we need to trust God's timing at present?

Point to ponder

If you had to choose between light and heat what would you choose and why?

Quotable Quotes

'The Light of Christ is the brightness of God shining on the retina of the human soul'. John Piper

Jesus works made who He was manifestly clear;

His works shone and they still shone'. Jon Bloom

One reason the darkness around us is so terrifying is that we see so much of ourselves in it – our weaknesses, our fears, our brokenness, our sin.

For many of us no darkness is more intimidating than our own'. Marshall Segal



John 10 v 1-21

'I am the good shepherd'

Week Three

The shepherd's main responsibility was the safety and welfare of the sheep. He looked after their every need and protected them from danger. In biblical times he would live out in the fields with the sheep and often be in danger from wild animals himself.

1. As ever read this passage in different versions of scripture, pray and pause to let God speak. What immediately comes to mind?
2. This passage comes after Jesus healed the blind man; he may be in the crowd still listening to what Jesus is saying. If you were he, what would you be thinking about hearing these words?
3. V1 and 7 Jesus says 'truly, truly' or 'very truly' what is He trying to say that is so important? Why don't we 'get it' first time?!
4. Compare and contrast the thieves/robber/stranger and the shepherd. What does this tell us about Jesus?
5. What does John 10 v11 and v15 tell us is the defining act of a good shepherd?
6. What does it mean to us when Jesus says 'I am the gate?' v 8
7. V10: the thief comes to 'steal and kill and destroy'; who or what robs us of our identity in Christ and knowing whose we are?
8. Jesus, however, comes to 'give life and life to the full'; what does that mean for us today particularly in this season of COVID restrictions?
9. Jesus moves from being a shepherd (v1) to the 'good shepherd' v 11 reminding us of the meaning of Yahweh as Israel's shepherd – ruler, protector, leader and caring companion. Look at the following passages from the Old Testament: Psalm 23, Ezekiel 34, Isaiah 40 v 10-11. What strikes you from these verses?
10. What does this 'I am' statement tell us about Jesus, His mission and purpose?
11. What is God's invitation to us as sheep? Can you put it in one sentence?

Point to ponder

Jesus is the Saviour who seeks ... who serves ... who sacrifices ... who is our substitute and who secures our salvation.

Quotable Quotes

'The shepherd knows the weak and the strong, the stubborn and the submissive ones, the hurts and the needs of every sheep. And the sheep know and trust their shepherd – every inflection of His voice, the way by which He leads them out to pasture, His courage in the face of danger. He is their shepherd.' Roger Fredrickson.

'There is no neutral ground in the universe, every square inch, every split second is claimed by God and counter claimed by Satan'. CS Lewis

The glory of God is a human being, fully alive' Irenaeus

'The distinguishing mark of the Christian Church throughout the world is that it has only one head, that is Christ, the only keeper and shepherd of it'. Martin Luther

'There are no strangers in the flock of Christ; none of us are unrecognised, none of us are unloved'. JWD.

'Now may the God of peace who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, equip you with every good for doing His will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to Him through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen' Hebrews 13 v 20-21.



John 11 v 1-44

'I am the resurrection and the life'.

Week Four

Lazarus is dead and Martha his sister tells Jesus in her grief that he would not have died if Jesus had come earlier. Jesus' declaration to be the Resurrection and the Life is a claim to have control over life and death. Not only could He bring Lazarus back to life but He could give eternal life (life without end) to those who believe and put their trust in Him. To control life and death, or to create life and conquer death is truly an attribute of God. Martha understood this and said 'I believe that you are Christ the Son of God who is come into the world'.

1. As ever read this passage in different versions of scripture, pray and pause to let God speak. What immediately comes to mind?
2. V6 'Jesus stayed longer'. What do we think about this – did Jesus not care? How have we experienced the truth that God's delay are not God's denials?
3. V9-11 what does 'day' and 'night' here symbolise? Think back to week 2, how do we walk well in the day?
4. Jesus chooses to return to Judea despite the fact that there is likely to be challenge – what do you make of Thomas statement v16 and what it says about who he thinks Jesus is?
5. We hear lots about Mary and Martha and the difference between the two women; they both approach Jesus with the same question (v 20 and v 22) but Jesus response seems different to them both. What does this tell us?
6. V25 Jesus I am statement; what does this mean to you and I? How would we explain it to a non-Christian?
7. V33-38 What are the emotions that Jesus displays in these verses? "Deeply moved" v 33 & 38 means outraged. Why was Jesus outraged?
8. Max Lucado says 'the grave unearths our view of God'. V4 & 40 hint that this disaster is used for God's glory. What is our own testimony of this?
9. V44 Why does Jesus invite others to participate in this miracle? How would you have felt if you had been in the crowd that day?
10. The new life we have in Christ is our greatest gift. Can you explain how the Christian life compares with life without Christ? How can we live a resurrection life in a fallen world? Isaiah 40:31 and Phillipians 4:6-7
11. Jesus doesn't just make statements; He backs it up with action. What might we need to do/action this week in lights of today's study?

Point to ponder

General faith in the future is easier than specific faith for the present trial.

Quotable quotes

'There is nothing – no circumstance, no trouble, no testing that can ever touch me until first of all it was gone past God and past Christ right through to me.

If it has come that far it has come with a great purpose which I may not understand at the moment.

But as I refuse to become panicky, as I lift up my eyes to Him – and as I accept it as coming from the throne of God for some great purpose of blessing to my heart, no sorrow will ever disturb me,

no trial will ever disarm me, no circumstance will cause me to fret

for I shall rest in the joy of what my Lord is!' Alan Redpath

"How we deal with death is at least as important as how we deal with life!" JWD

'He died to give us life and, to give us hope, He rose'. Rebecca St James 'Hopes song'



John 14 v 1-14

'I am the way, the truth and the life'

Week Five

Jesus didn't say that He would show us the way, He said that He was the way. He is the path to the Father. He didn't promise to teach us the truth, He said He was the truth. He is the reality of all God's promises. Jesus didn't offer us the secrets to life, He said He was the life. He joins His divine life to ours both now and eternally.

1. This conversation happens on the last night before the crucifixion, during the Passover meal. Before this, Jesus had washed the disciple's feet, predicted his betrayal by Judas, predicted his denial by Peter, and told the disciples He would soon be going away. Read the passage in two different versions and ask God what He wants to say to you. What now comes to mind?
2. What do you think the disciples are thinking and feeling as this conversation is developing?
3. v1 Is a very precious scripture to many – what does it mean to you and I?
4. There are three occasions when Jesus is described as 'deeply troubled', John 11 v 33, John 12 v 27 and John 13 v 21. What does this tell us about Jesus and what confidence does this give us?
5. Troubled means "to cause inward turmoil, stir up, disturb, unsettle, throw into confusion". How can Jesus minister to our 'troubled heart'? v1-6
6. v2 What is the "Father's House"? What does this tell us about what Jesus will do, and what is provided for us? How does that comfort us?
7. Are we a Thomas (v5) or a Phillip (v8) in this passage? What do our questions reveal about us?
8. What is the emphasis of v 7-11; what is Jesus saying about His relationship with God and what difference does that make to us?
9. The word 'enough' in v8 is the same word that Paul uses in 2 Cor 12 v9. What is our 'enough'?
10. What does Jesus 'I am' statement here mean to you; how would you explain it to someone of no faith?
11. What are the implications of this for our church, community and world?
12. v13-14 What does it mean to pray 'in Jesus name'? What are we praying for currently?
13. What is your response in the light of this study?

Point to ponder

When you are uncertain, would you lean into Jesus as the way?

When you are confused, would you choose Jesus afresh as the truth?

When you are tempted to choose other things, would you choose Jesus afresh as your life?

Quotable quotes

'The essence of heaven is the immediate presence of Jesus' John Piper

'Faith in Christ's person and hope in Christ's promises will comfort your heart' JWD.

'As the way, Jesus is our path to the Father. As the truth, He is the reality of all God's promises. As the life, He joins his divine life to ours, both now and eternally' JWD.

"Follow me. I am the way and the truth and the life.

Without the way there is no going; without the truth there is no knowing;

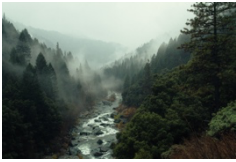
without the life there is no living. I am the way which you must follow; the truth which you must believe; the life for which you must hope. I am the inviolable way, the infallible truth, the never-ending life. I am the straightest way; the sovereign truth; life true, life blessed, life uncreated.

If you abide in my way you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,

and you shall attain life everlasting." Thomas a Kempis

'Prayer is never intended to cajole God into giving in to our desires. Rather, prayer is about seeking Him and His will with the intent of seeing His will to come to pass in our lives'. RF Wilson.

The only remedy for this dread of death and separation which is the stronghold of Satan, is faith in God who is firm and cannot be shaken'. RL Fredrikson.



John 15 v 1-11

'I am the true vine'

Week Six

The people of Palestine would be used to seeing the vines laden with fruit and fully understood the significance of the vine and its branches bringing nutrition and water for the grapes to grow. Jesus as the vine is our source of life demonstrating complete dependence and constant connection.

1. They have left the upper room and are out on the road. The disciples are clearly still struggling trying to comprehend what Jesus is telling them. I can imagine there is a vine up ahead and Jesus uses it as an illustration to help them understand. What everyday things in your world help you understand God more?
2. As ever read the passage above and spend some time being quiet before God listening to what He might want to say from a word, a phrase, a verse. What comes to mind?
3. v1 What is the role of the vinedresser?
4. v2 Jesus makes a distinction between two different types of pruning, one that promotes new and further growth and one that removes all that is already dead. Can you recall times of pruning in your life and why this was necessary?
5. v4 What does the word 'abide' mean to you? How are we encouraged to abide in Him?
6. v5-9 Why is the practice of intimacy with God essential?
7. v11 Jesus talks about joy on the eve of His death – what might it mean for you and I?
8. v12-13 what does it mean to practice sacrificial love? Who might need that from us today?
9. 'Disconnected' is both a sad and frustrating word. What disconnects us from God and each other? What can/do we want to do about this?
10. Do you remember a time when you were separated from the vine, away from fellowship, when things were dry. Can you share these experiences. What restored you to be part of the vine again?
11. This passage suggests a cycle of how God works in our lives – abiding, growth, harvest, pruning. Which season are you in and why?

Point to ponder

What three things might you do differently to better live out the 'life that God intends'?

Quotable quotes

'The one thing we most urgently need in Western Christendom is a deeper knowledge of God. We need to know God better'. Don Carson

'You will not be able to work up joy yourself, but God the Holy Spirit living inside of you can produce this joy supernaturally and a Christian is to have joy'. Billy Graham

'Life is full of gains and losses, joys and sorrows, ups and downs – but we do not have to live it alone. We want to drink our cup together and thus celebrate the truth that the wounds of our individual lives which seem intolerable when lived alone become sources of healing when we live as part of a fellowship of mutual care'. Henri Nouwen

'The New Testament knows of no such thing as solitary Christianity'. John Wesley

That God is jealous for our love is the greatest compliment He could possibly pay us' Abraham Kuyper
We can sing all the worship songs ever written and proclaim to all that we love Christ but these songs and statements are meaningless and hypocritical if we are not obedient to Him in every area of our life. Our feelings do not define our love. It is our motives, our actions, our obedience to Christ that defines our love for Christ'. David Watson



Revelation 1 v 4-18.

*'I am the alpha and the omega,
the first and the last and the living One'.*

Week Seven

As we come to this final study in Revelation it's important to remember that John is revealing what God has shown him; we don't have to understand every detail as John didn't, but see the message of the infinite love, power and justice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. John is writing to the seven churches that knew and trusted him and had read his earlier letters. As we read this passage what is the message to us now as a church?
2. What do we learn about the character of God in this verse? Why is this important?
3. V5-6 You may not regard yourself as a 'faithful witness' but all of us qualify because of what God has done for us. What can you 'witness' to in the past week?
4. V4-6 what are the three titles ascribed to Jesus in these verses and why are they important to us today?
5. V7 John is announcing Jesus return to earth What do we learn from this verse?
6. V8 What do we understand this verse to mean? What does it inspire in us?
7. V12-16 Jesus is seen among the seven lampstands, the churches; He loves His church! Do our attitudes please Him? What might He say to us today?
8. What is the significance of the number 7 in Scripture? Look at Gen 2 v 1-3; Jesus seven statements from the cross; the seven 'petitions' in the Lord's prayer; Psalm 12 v6; Isaiah 11 v1-2; Joshua 6 v 2-5?
9. What have you learnt from today's study and how might it help you this week?
10. Thinking back over the series how would you sum up its impact in one sentence?

Point to ponder

Revelation is a book of prophecy that is both prediction (foretelling future events) and proclamation (preaching about who God is and what He will do). Behind the predictions are important principles about God's character and promises.

Quotable quotes

"Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!" John in Revelation.

"Sovereign Lord, you are God! Your covenant is trustworthy, and you have promised these good things to your servant." 2 Samuel 7:28

"God has promised forgiveness to your repentance, but He has not promised tomorrow to your procrastination." Augustine of Hippo

"God's plan is not to abandon this world, the world which He said was "very good."

Rather, He intends to remake it. And when He does He will raise all His people to new bodily life to live in it. That is the promise of the Christian gospel." NT Wright

"Let God's promises shine on your problems." Corrie ten Boom

"God never made a promise that was too good to be true." DL Moody