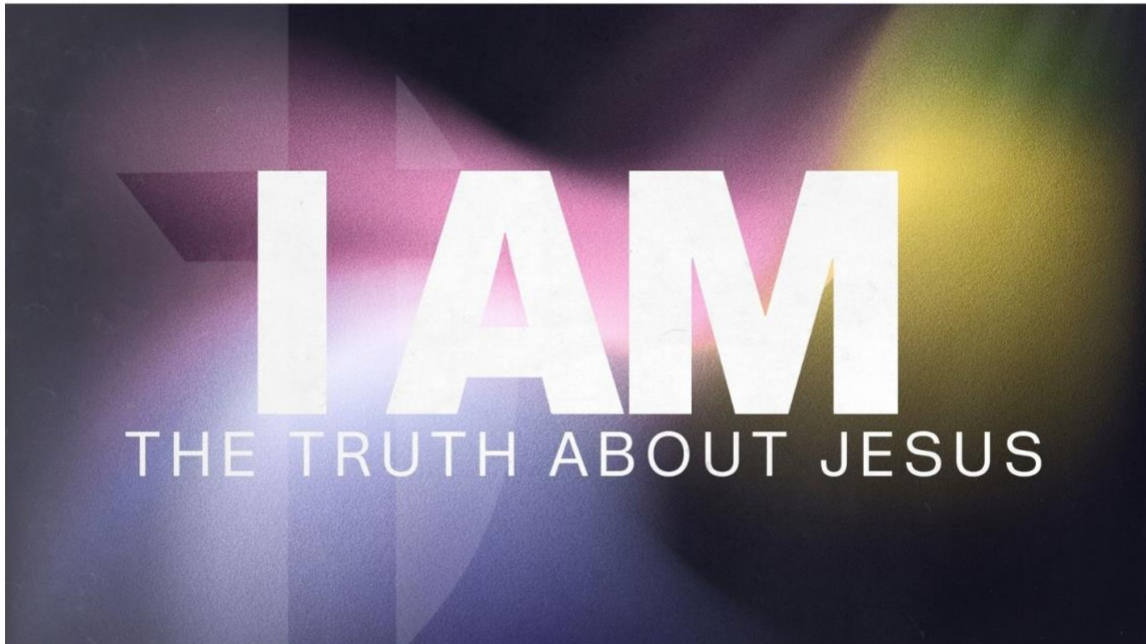




STUDY GUIDE

Fall 2026



“I am “Statement An Introduction

Truth has been sought after for generations, and we seek it today.

Every day we are bombarded by questions about truth. Is the image real, or is it AI? Do I trust this news source or that news source? Can I really trust people? Truth feels elusive at best. Truth is that which is real, trustworthy, and factual. Where do we find it?

We desire truth that leads to contentment, not inadequacy; safety, not danger; following, not lost; love, not hate; life, not death; truth, not lies; dependency, not self-reliance. This is the truth about Jesus, our Savior. This truth sets us free.

Old Testament Connection

But we start in the Old Testament, with a familiar person in the Bible, Moses. Moses was raised in the Pharaoh's home, then fled when he murdered an Egyptian supervisor whom he witnessed being abusive. One day, Moses is tending to his flock when he observes a burning bush. Yahweh, the LORD, says to Moses that he has seen the humiliation of the Israelites, heard their cries for help, knows their pain, and plans to rescue them. Yahweh tells Moses, a non-descript, average person, that it is Moses who will lead the people out of slavery in Egypt to freedom in the promised land. Moses is stunned, to say the least, and has feelings of inadequacy. He questions: Who is he to be the one to bring them out of slavery? Yahweh says, “I am with you.” Moses then asks, Who am I to say sent me? The NIV translation of Exodus 3:13 specifically notes that Moses is asking what name he should give for who has sent him. God answers, “I AM who I AM. This is what you are to say, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

“I AM who I AM.” Exodus 3:14

I am is a declaration of authority.

“I am” is more than a name in Yahweh’s response; it is a declaration of authority. God is the I am, the one true God. “I am” is not limited to the words spoken in Exodus; we find these definitive two words within the Gospel of John. This time, it is Jesus declaring who he is, the truth of our God. These seven “ I am ” statements of declaration are not in ancient isolation; rather, they speak in the midst of our need for the truth that circumvents the confusion of what is real, voices vying for our attention, and the internal dilemmas of where we are to find the truth.

Jesus is truth.

The seven “I am” statements are the following:

- **I am the bread of life. John 6:35**
- **I am the light of the world. John 8:12**
- **I am the gate. John 10:7**
- **I am the good shepherd. John 10:11**
- **I am the resurrection and the life. John 11:25**
- **I am the way, the truth, and the life. John 14:6**
- **I am the true vine. John 15:1**

In each session in this series, we assess the truth found in each one about Jesus and apply the truth to our lives today. Truth is not elusive; rather, it is our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Session 1

October 4, 2026

The Truth about Contentment

I am statement: I am the bread of life. John 6:35

Prayer

- Begin and close with prayer
- Consider asking various members of the group to lead the prayer.

Conversation Starters

- What does it mean to be content?
- Share examples of being content.

Background Information

Contentment means being satisfied.

Contentment means being satisfied. That is the basic definition. This definition can be expanded to include sufficiency or having enough. When we are content, we are satisfied; we have enough; what we have is sufficient. Our first “I am” statement, our first truth of Jesus, is that Jesus is “the bread of life”.

People have been seeking contentment for a long time.

The desire for contentment has been around since the beginning of time, with people seeking enough. We see this desire for contentment, and finding it in places other than God, illustrated in the Old Testament. Two examples are Adam and Eve and the Israelites.

Adam and Eve sought contentment.

Seeking more than we have is as old as scripture itself. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve sought more than they had, eating from the tree forbidden by the Lord. They were not content with what they had. We see this pattern replayed time and time again in Scripture.

The Israelites were afraid there would not be enough.

A powerful example is when the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. They complained that they did not have enough to eat. God provided manna and quail, enough for one day at a time. That was not enough, so the Israelites rebelled and hoarded the manna and quail so they would have enough. They realized that it spoiled overnight. God provided enough for a day.

The disciples ask what sign Jesus will give, as God provided manna for their ancestors.

Jesus' first "I am" statement found in the book of John is "I am the bread of life". In the verses preceding John 6:35, the disciples are seeking answers from Jesus, such as "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Then they ask about what sign Jesus will give, as God provided manna for their ancestors.

Through Jesus words found in John 6:32-35, we gain insight into how Jesus is the bread of life.

Scripture Connection

Read Jesus' response in John 6:32-35

Questions about the scripture:

- Who does Jesus say bread from heaven comes from?
- What does the bread from heaven give to the world?
- Identify Jesus' declaration of truth in the first "I am" statement, and his explanation.
- Discuss the role belief plays in the bread of life.

- Discuss how the truth of this “I am” statement relates to our everyday life.

Next Steps Connection

- During the upcoming week, prayerfully observe how you are content in the moment, or the day, or how you are seeking more than what you have.

Resources

- Additional scriptures: Exodus 3:14; Exodus 16:1-36; Matthew 6:9-13; Matthew 26:26-30; John 6:1-5

Session 2
Week of October 11
The Truth about Darkness

I am statement: I am the light of the world. John 8:12

Prayer

- Begin and close with prayer
- Consider asking various members of the group to lead the prayer.

Conversation Starters

- Are you afraid of the dark? How do you become afraid of the darkness?
- How do we experience darkness beyond physical darkness?

Background Information

We are taught to fear darkness.

We are taught from an early age to fear the dark. There could be monsters there. There is the physical darkness in which we are scared of what might be. There is also the darkness that we experience internally, the places where our burdens lie heavy. There is mental, emotional, and spiritual darkness.

Darkness is evident from the beginning of Scripture.

Darkness is found in the beginning. The rescue story of our God begins with the first words found in the Bible, **“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was**

hovering over the waters.” Formless. Empty. Darkness. The Spirit of God hovers.

Light is found in the beginning as well, through the words that follow the first words about darkness. **“And God said, ‘Let there be light’, and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated light from the darkness.”** We see in the earliest words of Scripture the contrast of dark and light, and God’s role in it.

Darkness and light illuminate the beginning of the Gospel of John as well.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him, nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.
John 1:1-5

Jesus is the “Word”, who was with God from the beginning; through him all things are made, life and light. Jesus’ “I am” statement about the truth of light is that Jesus is the light of the world.

Jesus’ first statement about being the light of the world is challenged by the Pharisees.

Jesus’ first statement about being the light of the world is found in John 8. The verses preceding Jesus’ statement about being the light of the world are the story of the woman caught in adultery, who is brought before Jesus to be stoned. Jesus speaks these words, “Let anyone of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.”, then bends down to write on the ground. He heard the stones begin to drop, as no one felt qualified to cast the first stone; then Jesus speaks these words to the woman, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” She says No. Jesus then sends her on her way, without condemnation either, but with words to leave her life of sin.

John 8:12 is the first statement of Jesus being the light of the world. The very next verse, the Pharisees challenge Jesus, accusing him of being his own witness.

John 9:5, which also describes Jesus as the light of the world, is embedded in Jesus' answer about who sinned to cause a blind man to be born blind.

The disciples want to know who sinned to cause the blind man to be born blind. Jesus's explanation includes noting that he is the light of the world.

Take time now to consider how being the light of the is part of Jesus' response to who sinned to cause the man to be blind.

Scripture Connection

Read John 9:1-7.

Questions about the scripture:

- Does Jesus say that the man or his parents are the cause of the sin?
- What is the significance of day and night in these verses?
- Describe the outcome noted in these verses about Jesus as being the light of the world.

Next Steps Connection

- During the upcoming week, note when you experience darkness or light. Does the darkness overcome the light, or does the light overcome the darkness?

Resources

- Additional scriptures: John 1:4-9; John 3:19-21; John 9:1-7; John 1:5-10; Psalm 27; Psalm 119:105

Session 3
Week of October 18
The Truth about Following

I am statement: I am the gate. John 10:7

Prayer

- Begin and close with prayer
- Consider asking various members of the group to lead the prayer.

Conversation Starters

- Share examples in current culture of how we follow.
- Who are we currently following?

Background Information

Jesus begins with an invitation to follow.

At the core of being a disciple of Jesus Christ is following. From the beginning of Jesus' ministry through today, the invitation is to "follow me". We witness this on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, as Jesus calls Peter, Andrew, and James to "follow me". Matthew was called from the tax collector booth to do the same, "follow me". Prior to Jesus ascending into heaven, he commanded the earliest disciples to "go and make disciples". A call that echoes across generations to us today. We begin with this call as we consider the "I am" statement of Jesus that he is the gate.

Two of the "I am" statements are connected to imagery of sheep and a shepherd.

The next two "I am" statements focus on the imagery of a shepherd and sheep. For the original hearers of the Gospel of John, shepherd and sheep

were a part of their cultural understanding. In Scripture, the shepherd-and-sheep imagery appears in both the Old and New Testaments.

Imagine a pasture with sheep, a rock wall enclosing the sheep, and an open gate.

In this session, the “I am” statement is Jesus declaration, “I am the gate for the sheep.” Take a moment to imagine a pasture with sheep, a rock wall around them, and an open gate. There is not a door that keeps the sheep in or out, but an opening. There is the belief that a shepherd would lay down as the gate to keep the sheep in or thieves out. This is the imagery of Jesus as the gate. The scripture does not say that Jesus goes through the gate, but rather that Jesus is the gate.

The gate protects, yet we get to choose to enter through the gate of Jesus.

Within this statement about Jesus being the gate is a question of who we are following, or who our leader is. Jesus’ words to the earliest disciples are to “follow me”. Jesus’ words about being the gate are a statement of following. Who or what are we following?

Scripture Connection

Read John 10:7-10

Questions about the scripture:

- Read verse John 10:6. What happens in this verse that leads to John 10:7-10?
- Discuss the role of the thieves and robbers in these verses.
- What is the reason that this scripture says that Jesus has come?
- How does this scripture apply to our lives today?

Next Steps Connection

- Identify concrete ways that Jesus serves as the gate for you this week.

Resources

- Additional scriptures: Ezekiel 34; Matthew 18:1-14; Luke 15:1-7

Session 4
Week of October 25
The Truth about Love

I am statement: I am the good shepherd. John 10:11

Prayer

- Begin and close with prayer
- Consider asking various members of the group to lead the prayer.

Conversation Starters

- Share our thoughts about what a shepherd is and why we would need a shepherd, particularly a good one.

Background Information

Images of shepherds are found in both the Old and New Testaments.

Shepherds and sheep are not necessarily common in our cultural context. For the original audience for whom Jesus was speaking, shepherds and sheep were very common. As we see in Scripture, Jesus uses illustrations that connect with his audience, and that is true in this illustration as well. The image of a shepherd and sheep is found in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. Psalm 23:1

Psalm 23 is one of the most well-known psalms. The psalm begins with the powerful words of the Lord being our shepherd, and we lack nothing. Many of us are familiar with Psalm 23 beginning with the words, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” The image of the shepherd providing for us.

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Matthew 9:36

Jesus speaks about sheep and shepherd as noted in Matthew 9:36. He views the crowds as sheep without a shepherd. This is an example in the New Testament of the language of sheep and shepherd.

Agape love is sacrificial.

Jesus as the good shepherd is rooted in God's agape love for us. The English language has multiple uses for the word one word, love. In the original language of the New Testament, Greek, there are multiple words. Agape is the word that describes God's love for us in the New Testament. This is a sacrificial love, which we see manifested in and through Jesus. "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep," according to John 10:11. This is agape love.

Scripture Connection

Read John 10:11-18

Questions about the scripture:

- What is the difference between a hired hand and a shepherd?
- Discuss the importance of a shepherd's voice.
- What role does the Father play in these verses and with the good shepherd?
- How do we experience the agape love of the good shepherd in our lives?

Next Steps Connection

- Be aware this upcoming week of our need for agape love.

Resources

- Additional scriptures: Psalm 23; Isaiah 40:10-11

Session 5
Week of November 1
The Truth about Life

I am statement: I am the resurrection and the life. John 11:25

Prayer

- Begin and close with prayer
- Consider asking various members of the group to lead the prayer.

Conversation Starters

- What are our fears about death?
- What are our hopes about living?

Background Information

The fifth “I am” statement is found within the story of Lazarus’ death and resurrection. Lazarus, who is a good friend of Jesus and the brother of Mary and Martha, becomes severely ill. The sisters sent word to Jesus about Lazarus being sick. Lazarus passes away prior to Jesus arriving, since he did not go to him immediately. Jesus arrives to comfort the sisters and engages in a conversation with Martha, in which the “I am” statement, “I am the resurrection and the life” is found.

At our foundation, we are resurrection people.

At our core, as Christians, we are resurrection people. Annually, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our hope is found in life with Jesus here and in eternity. We are a resurrection people.

Death is inevitable.

There are truly few absolutes in life, but death is one of them. It is a truth that at times haunts us. Yet, death does not get the final word. We believe in the resurrection and life eternal through Jesus Christ. This is the truth about Jesus.

In order for there to be a resurrection, there must be a death.

The truth about resurrection is that there must be a death first, before there can be resurrection. We see this within Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Through resurrection, we have life, both the life today and life eternal.

What we believe matters.

Jesus statement about being the resurrection and the life includes what we believe. The question at the core of Jesus as the resurrection and the life is: do we believe this to be true? Jesus states that those who believe in him will never die. Do we believe this?

Scripture Connection

Read John 11:17-27

Questions about the scripture:

- Discuss the interaction between Jesus and Martha.
- What is the importance of belief in these verses?
- How does Jesus describe death and life in these verses?
- How does the truth about Jesus as the resurrection and life have meaning in our lives today?

Next Steps Connection

- This week, make a list of questions you have about life, death, and resurrection. Bring them to the group next week and discuss them.

Resources

- Additional scriptures: Luke 24:1-5; John 10:1-10; 1 John 1:1-4

Session 6
Week of November 8
The Truth about Truth

I am statement: I am the way, the truth, and the life. John 14:6

Prayer

- Begin and close with prayer
- Consider asking various members of the group to lead the prayer.

Conversation Starters

- Discuss questions from the list you made the past week about life, death, and resurrection.
- What are the challenges to truth today?
- Where do we find truth today?

Background Information

The sixth “I am” statement is found in the book of John, following John’s account of the Last Supper with the foot-washing and Jesus prediction of Peter’s denial of Jesus. The first verses of John 14 note Jesus assuring the disciples not to be troubled, that he goes before them preparing a place for them. This is perplexing to the disciples. Thomas is the first disciple to ask a question.

Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” John 14:5

Thomas asks a question about how they will know the way to where Jesus is going. Thomas is confused by Jesus’ words. He wants more information

about what Jesus is referring. Remember, it is Thomas who will later ask to see physical evidence of Jesus' resurrection.

Jesus responds that he is the way, the truth, and the life.

Jesus responds to Thomas' question with what is the sixth "I am" statement. Thomas wants to know the way to the place where Jesus is going. Jesus responds that Jesus is the way to where he is going.

The way is the path.

The definition of the way is that it is a path. The path leads to a destination, the place where Jesus is going. To answer Thomas' question about the way to get there, it is through Jesus. This is the truth about the truth.

The truth is factual.

Truth is factual, just the facts. The truth about Jesus being the way to the Father is the truth; it is real.

The life is living.

Saying that life is living seems obvious, but in the context of this scripture. Jesus being life is the life here and now, and the life eternal. Jesus is the way to our living now and eternal life.

Scripture Connection

Read John 14:5-7

Questions about the scripture:

- Jesus makes an absolute statement in these verses; what is it?
- If we know Jesus, who else do we know?
- How does this truth about Jesus give clarity about other truths in our lives?
- Discuss the importance of this truth in our daily lives.

Next Steps Connection

- Observe over the next week how the truth about Jesus being the way, the truth, and the life, helps us live our daily lives.

Resources

- Additional scriptures: John 1:4; John 1:14; John 5:20

Session 7
Week of November 15
The Truth about Dependency

I am statement: I am the true vine. John 15:1

Prayer

- Begin and close with prayer
- Consider asking various members of the group to lead the prayer.

Conversation Starters

- Discuss what self-reliance is. How is self-reliance rewarded in our culture?
- Identify flaws with being self-reliant.

Background Information

15 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

⁵ “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Where do we put our reliance?

Possible responses include the following: self, others, status, achievement, wealth, or the true vine? That is at the core of this “I am” statement. On whom do we depend?

Self-reliance is rewarded within culture. Such phrases as “make your own way” or “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” are a couple of examples of self-reliance. For many, self-reliance has proven successful. There are examples of success and achievement, yet there is also something missing even in the midst of the success.

Key word #1 is remain.

First and foremost, our dependence is on God. Some translations use the word “abide”; others use “remain” in these verses describing Jesus as the true vine. The instructions are to abide, or remain, in Jesus. John 15:4 states, “No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine.” Dependency in Jesus is about remaining in Jesus, being connected to Jesus.

Key word #2 is fruit.

In our previous series about having a heart of generosity, we discussed Luke 6 and how Jesus speaks about good fruit and bad fruit. Galatians 5, notes the fruit of the Spirit being the following: love, joy, peace, goodness, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Fruit is found in the New Testament, including in John 15. The fruit being discussed here is not our financial worth or our achievements, but fruit that comes from being connected to Jesus, being dependent on Jesus.

Scripture Connection

Read John 15:1-6.

Questions about the scripture:

- Identify the number of times that these six verses note “remain”. What is the importance of remaining in Jesus?

- How do we remain in Jesus? Note examples in our daily lives.
- What are barriers to remaining in Jesus?
- What are examples of fruit that is born from depending on Jesus?

Next Steps Connection

- Be intentional this week to observe how you remain in Jesus and the fruit that comes from this.

Resources

- Additional scriptures: Isaiah 5:1-7; Ezekiel 17:5-10; John 13:12-20, 34-35

***A note of gratitude: Several weeks ago, a spiritual mentor of mine passed away unexpectedly. Diane Baylor, who served in Kids Ministry at Cokesbury UMC for 35 years, including in the director role, was one of the folks who welcomed me and guided me through those early years of my return to church in my late 20s and early 30s. She has continued to be one of those folks who I always knew were supporting me. I got to have lunch with Diane in April, a time that filled my soul in so many ways. One of the topics we discussed was curriculum. She was passionate about curriculum, about the resources we use to teach, lead, and guide others to get to know Jesus more. I have spent lots of time over the past weeks celebrating Diane's role in God's story in my own life and reflecting on how she led in ministry. I just wanted to acknowledge her in some small way. A note of gratitude at the end of curriculum seemed appropriate. -Brooke*