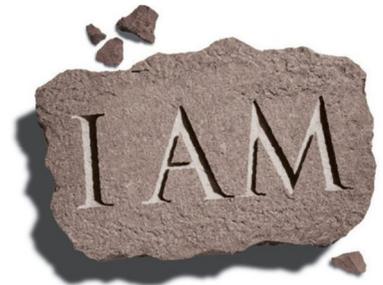


JESUS' "I AM" STATEMENTS

LAMB OF GOD LUTHERAN CHURCH

SPRING 2016

LESSON ONE: I AM THE I AM



Introduction

1. Write seven statements about yourself, beginning with the words, "I am..." and concluding with something that fits into each category listed. Be prepared to explain what you mean by your choices.

- I am... [animal]
- I am... [food]
- I am... [plant]
- I am... [color]
- I am... [shape]
- I am... [vehicle or mode of transportation]
- I am... [building]

2. Explain the effect of using such metaphorical language to describe oneself.

Jesus uses several such metaphors to describe himself. Our goal in this course is to gain a deeper knowledge of, love for, and increased faith in our Savior Jesus by examining these "I AM" statements of Jesus, that we might be moved to worship and witness for him more joyfully in our lives.

Digging In

3. Read John 8:31-53. The people were having a hard time accepting Jesus and his teachings. Summarize their objections in this account.



4. According to verse 31, why was it important for the people to accept what Jesus was saying?
5. Read John 8:52-59. What was the final objection the Jews had against what Jesus was saying?
6. Explain Jesus' response to their objection.
7. To fully understand Jesus' claim, we need to understand what "I AM" meant for the Jewish listener. Read Exodus 3:1-15. Describe the setting in which this exchange takes place. What mission was the Lord giving to Moses? What was Moses' question for the Lord?
8. Why do you think the Lord chose the name "I AM" for himself. In the context of Exodus 3, how would the name "I AM" be a source of faith-building comfort and encouragement for the Jews?
9. The Old Testament name "LORD" is based on the Hebrew for "I AM." When Moses asked to see the Lord for reassurance for the mission he was given, the Lord gave Moses a commentary on this name. Read Exodus 34:5-7, and list the key thoughts that the name "I AM" held for God's people.
10. Jesus didn't explicitly state this connection to the Lord's name for himself, when he said, "Before Abraham was born, I am." How do you know that his opponents understood exactly what he was claiming? (cf. Leviticus 24:16)



Taking It Home

11. Jesus still calls people to respond to his identity and his teachings today. What claims that Jesus makes about himself do you think raise the most intense objections today? Why are these so hard to accept?

12. What personal comfort do you find in Jesus calling himself "I AM"? (cf. Hebrews 13:8)

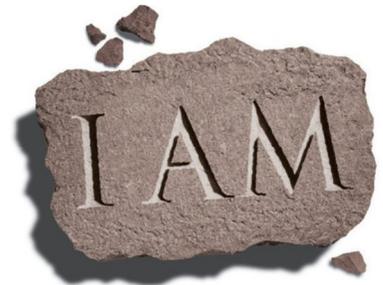
13. Write a prayer, expressing the comfort you find in this name for Jesus and seeking the Lord's strength to trust Jesus' claims about himself.

JESUS' "I AM" STATEMENTS

LAMB OF GOD LUTHERAN CHURCH

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LESSON TWO: I AM THE DOOR



Introduction

1. What comes to mind when you think of a door? What characteristics and purposes does a door have?

Digging In

Read John 10:1-10. Jesus uses a slightly different set of pictures here than where he describes himself as the shepherd later in this chapter. We can understand this section more clearly, if we keep it separate from what Jesus says after verse 10.

2. How is Jesus' the Door through which the sheep and the shepherd(s) come in and go out?
3. In this context, which of the following do you think the sheep pen in Jesus' words might represent? Explain your choice(s).
 - a. the Christian Church
 - b. the World
 - c. the Unbelieving World
 - d. Other
4. As was the case in Jesus' day, the Lord still appoints shepherds to care for and lead the Shepherd's flock (1 Peter 5:2-4). Who were these shepherds in Jesus' day? Who are they today?



5. How did the false shepherds of Jesus' day attempt to get themselves and others into God's kingdom? Share specific examples of present-day shepherds in the church who try to do the same. What is the result?

6. Jesus promises that coming in and going out through him leads his sheep to have "life to the full." What does this mean, and what doesn't it mean about what Christians can expect? (cf. John 16:33, Acts 14:21-22)

7. Discuss the following statements:
 - If a church teaches that Jesus is the door, that's the important thing. It really doesn't matter what other things that church might teach.

 - People in heterodox churches—that is, churches that mix the truth of Scripture with error—can still be saved.

 - The one essential duty of a faithful pastor—in his preaching, teaching, counseling, etc.— is to lead his people to heaven, always and only, through the gate.

 - God will often lead us to recognize that our pastor is a faithful shepherd as we sense our relationship with Jesus growing stronger.

Taking It Home

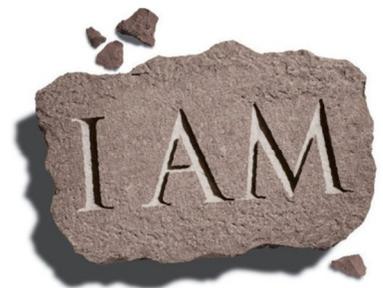
8. What personal comfort do you find in Jesus calling himself "the Door"?

9. Write a prayer, expressing the comfort you find in this name for Jesus.

JESUS' "I AM" STATEMENTS

LAMB OF GOD LUTHERAN CHURCH

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LESSON THREE: I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Introduction

1. List as many shepherds as you can, who are mentioned in the Bible.¹
2. How does knowing that caring for sheep was such a significant part of Biblical culture affect your appreciation for Jesus' description of himself as a shepherd?

Digging In

Read John 10:11-18.

3. Describe the picture(s) of Jesus as the Good Shepherd that you see most often. Compare that picture to the way Jesus describes his role as the Good Shepherd here.
4. Jesus could have just said, "I am the shepherd of the sheep." Instead he says, "I am the good shepherd." There are two main words for "good" in the New Testament: *agathos* and *kalos*. *Agathos* focuses on that which is "good" because it is useful and serves its purpose. *Kalos*, which is used here, is "good" in the sense of being beautiful, excellent, and of the highest quality. According to the text, what actions or qualities make Jesus a "good" shepherd?
5. Who are the "hired hands" (or, perhaps better, "hirelings") in today's church? By what are they motivated? Give examples of what might cause these hirelings to flee and abandon the flock.

¹ For example, see Genesis 4:2; Genesis 29; Genesis 47:3; Exodus 3:1; 1 Samuel 16:19; Amos 7:14-15; Luke 2:8.



6. How are Jesus' words in v. 12-13 a warning to us, his flock (cf. Matthew 7:15-16)? How are Jesus' words a comfort to us?
7. Who are the "other sheep that are not of this sheep pen"? Describe the impact of the word "must" in verse 16. (cf. Romans 8:29-30)
8. Give evidence from Jesus' life to support his claim that "No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord."
9. In light of verses 12-13, why is it vitally important for us that Jesus take up his life again, after he lays it down for the sheep?

Taking It Home

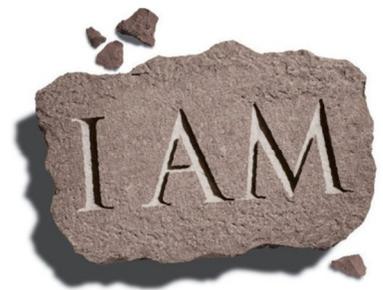
10. Scan 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 6. What else does Jesus' authority over death and the grave mean for us?
11. Psalm 23 is one of the most well known and most loved sections of the Bible. Why do you think that is?
12. Write a prayer, expressing the comfort you find in this name for Jesus.

JESUS' "I AM" STATEMENTS

LAMB OF GOD LUTHERAN CHURCH

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LESSON FOUR: I AM THE VINE



Introduction

1. Describe what it means to you to be "connected." Is being "connected" something you want to be? Why or why not?
2. Read Isaiah 5:1-7 and Psalm 80:8-16. Who or what had been compared to a vine before? What happened to that vine? How might this affect a Jewish listener's understanding of an illustration that calls people the branches on a vine?

Digging In

Read John 15:1-8.

3. How could Jesus' claim to be the *true* vine be received by his Jewish audience as either a message of law or a message of gospel?
4. Jesus stresses the importance of having a connection with him. What connects us to the Savior? What other ways might people claim to have or try to make a connection to God?
5. Why does someone prune a plant? Why does the Father prune the branches that are connected to Christ?

Give examples of what the Father might use to prune us branches.



6. Comment on the significance of the following words in verse 5:
 - a. "will"
 - b. "much"
 - c. "nothing"

7. Jesus uses the word "remain" eight times in this short discourse. What warning is implied by his frequent use of this word? How will Christians respond? Share one specific thing you are doing in your life to stay connected to Jesus.

8. How is the fruit that we bear to the Father's glory and not to our own?

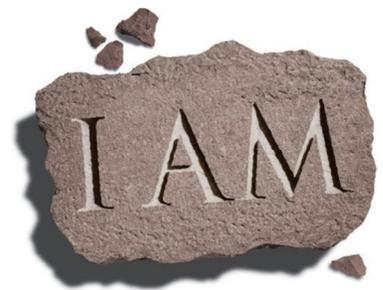
Taking It Home

9. How would you respond to each of the following statements spoken by Christians?
 - a. "I'm not sure why the Lord took my job away. He must be punishing me."
 - b. "I pray all the time. I don't have to attend worship services to be a Christian."
 - c. "I'm so disgusted with myself. I want to live for the Lord, but no matter how hard I try, I keep messing up. Sometimes I wonder if I'm really a Christian at all."
10. Write a prayer, expressing the comfort you find in this name for Jesus.

JESUS' "I AM" STATEMENTS

LAMB OF GOD LUTHERAN CHURCH

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LESSON FIVE: I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE

Introduction

1. Once again, Jesus picks up on imagery that is used in other parts of Scripture. Read Ezekiel 2:8–3:4 and Revelation 10:8-10. How does God's command to taste and eat his Word help us to grasp how he wants us to hear it?

Digging In

Read John 6:24-59.

2. Jesus often uses something immediately visible or on the minds of the people to teach a spiritual truth. In what context did Jesus claim to be the Bread of Life? How did Jesus apply his teaching to what the people were thinking about?
3. List examples of the "food that spoils" that Jesus refers to in verse 27. What does Jesus mean when he tells us not to work for this food?
4. List some of the work that needs to take place for you to have daily bread to eat. List the work that Jesus did in order to feed you the Bread of Life.
5. What hunger and thirst does Jesus, the Bread of Life, satisfy? How can he say we "will never go hungry" and "will never be thirsty"?
6. Explain how verse 44 is comforting to you in your faith in Christ.

7. What promise does Jesus make repeatedly in these verses (v. 39,40,44,54)? List other references to "life" in this account.



Read John 6:60-69

8. What do you think was the hardest teaching for Jesus' audience to accept, and why?
9. How does Peter's response to Jesus' question show that he was listening and taking to heart what Jesus was saying?

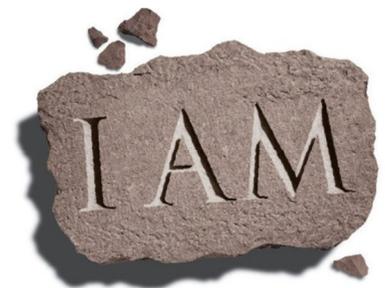
Taking It Home

10. Which teachings of Jesus do you think are the most difficult for people to hear and accept today? How do you respond to those who struggle with such teachings?
11. Did the apostles struggle to accept Jesus' teaching? What can we learn from Peter's response to Jesus' question, when we struggle with "hard teachings"?
12. Write a prayer, expressing the comfort you find in this name for Jesus.

JESUS' "I AM" STATEMENTS

LAMB OF GOD LUTHERAN CHURCH

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LESSON SIX: I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Introduction

1. Imagine being in a strange house by yourself at night when the power suddenly goes out. The darkness is smothering. You begin to search for a flashlight or book of matches. Why might your search in the darkness be frustrating? What other emotions might the darkness create in you?

2. One of the common pictures for sin in the Bible is darkness (or blindness). In what ways are sin and darkness similar? (Isaiah 59:9-10, Matthew 15:14-15)

Digging In

Read John 8:12-20.

3. What is the connection between light and life in the physical world? in the spiritual world?

4. Read John 3:19-21. Explain how Jesus' claim to be the light of the world can be either a message of law or a message of gospel. In this context, which do you think was the primary meaning Jesus intended?

5. Describe the Pharisees' reaction to Jesus' claim. How do we explain such a strong negative reaction to the light?



6. Read John 1:4-9 and 1 Corinthians 4:4. Although the "light shines in the darkness" of this world, some people prefer and choose to remain in the darkness. Why? What are the implications for our sharing the light of Jesus with our fellow sinners?

Read John 9:1-41.

7. When illness, tragedy, or death happens, we want to know "why." The question "why" can be a question of either cause (Why? = What caused this?) or purpose (Why? = For what purpose?). Which do the disciples imply, and which does Jesus address, as he answers the question about the reason for the man's blindness? How might we answer the same question about our spiritual blindness?
8. What did Jesus mean when he said, "As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work"? Apply these words to your life.
9. How would the timing of Jesus' claim to be the light of the world have made his words that much more vivid and memorable?
10. How do the reactions of the man and the Pharisees illustrate blindness and sight?

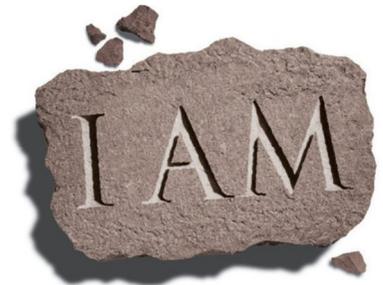
Taking It Home

11. Read Matthew 5:14-16. Compare what Jesus said about himself with what he says about his followers. What is the same? What is different? How are the two related?
12. Write a prayer, expressing the comfort you find in this name for Jesus.

JESUS' "I AM" STATEMENTS

LAMB OF GOD LUTHERAN CHURCH

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LESSON SEVEN: I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

Introduction

1. List evidence you see in the world of people's fear of death and ways they try to cover up that fear.

Digging In

Read John 11:1-16.

2. Mary and Martha identify their brother to Jesus as "the one you love," using the Greek word "*phileō*," which denotes the love of friendship, companionship, and brotherhood (v. 3). John takes it one step further, when he reports that Jesus "loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus," using the Greek word "*agapaō*," which denotes selfless, unconditional love that acts in the best interest of others without any expectation of love in return (v. 5). Which kind of love would you want from Jesus, when you or your loved one is dying?
3. The "yet" at the beginning of verse 6 is better translated "so" (as it is in the NIV 2011, HCSB, ESV, and other translations). Jesus waits to go see Lazarus *because* he loves Martha and Mary. This seems strange. How did Jesus' waiting show his love for them?
4. Jesus doesn't say, "Let us go to Bethany," but, "Let us go back to Judea." Explain the significance of Jesus' setting out for Judea. (cf. v. 8; v. 45-53)
5. (v. 16) Thomas says, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." The "him" could refer to Lazarus or to Jesus. Lazarus seems more likely, since Jesus just said, "Lazarus is dead...let us go to him." In either case, how do Thomas' words show a lack of faith?



Read John 11:17-44.

6. What is the significance of Lazarus being in the tomb for four days?

7. What emotions do we hear from Martha in her conversation with Jesus? Compare these emotions to what people typically experience or express at the death of a loved one.

8. Jesus could have just said, "I am the Resurrection," but he adds, "and the Life." What is Jesus saying, beyond giving us the assurance of the resurrection on the Last Day? (cf. John 1:4; John 10:10; Acts 3:15; 1 John 1:1-2)

9. Jesus asked, "Do you believe this?" Martha's response in verse 27 is a model for all believers. Explain her three-part confession.

10. Jesus is "deeply moved in spirit and troubled," and then he weeps? How is this a comforting scene in the midst of our grief and sorrow over death?

Taking It Home

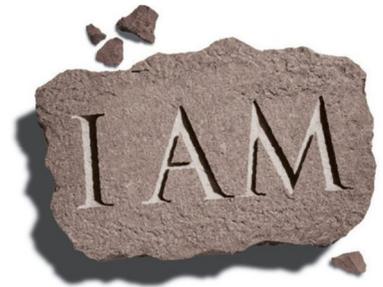
11. When attending the funeral of a loved one, both believers and unbelievers will be blessed by hearing this account from Scripture. Why? Contrast this with other messages that are often shared at funerals today and their effect on those in attendance.

12. Write a prayer, expressing the comfort you find in this name for Jesus.

JESUS' "I AM" STATEMENTS

LAMB OF GOD LUTHERAN CHURCH

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LESSON EIGHT: I AM THE WAY AND THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE

Introduction

1. Jesus, on trial before Pontius Pilate, said, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." And Pilate responded, "What is truth?" (John 19:37-38) Where have you seen evidence of a similar attitude toward "truth" today? How have you seen our culture's concept of "truth" change in your lifetime?

Digging In

Read John 14:1-7.

2. Jesus' words are part of his farewell discourse spoken on the night he was betrayed and arrested. Why did the disciples need this special encouragement at this time? How do the Savior's words and the setting in which they were spoken reveal his selfless and compassionate heart?
3. How is the way that Jesus answered Thomas' question encouraging to you, when you have doubts and questions?
4. How does Jesus' claim to *be* the truth, rather than simply to know or speak the truth, differ from the truth of wise philosophers and teachers?
5. Many people contend that Jesus Christ is simply one of many ways to reach God and that his truth is just one of many truths. What comfort might there be in the belief that there are many ways and many truths?

6. What comfort is there in hearing Jesus describe himself as “the way and the truth and the life,” instead of leaving the door wide open to many beliefs?



Can Non-Christian Religions Lead to Eternal Life?

| | Many religions lead to eternal life | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|---|---------------|---------------|
| | My religion is the one true faith | Only Christianity | Some non-Christian religions can lead to eternal life | Other/DK/ref. | Other/DK/ref. |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| All Christians | 29 | 12 | 50 | 4 | 5=100 |
| Protestant | 33 | 15 | 43 | 4 | 6 |
| <i>Evangelical</i> | 41 | 17 | 31 | 4 | 7 |
| <i>Mainline</i> | 15 | 10 | 65 | 5 | 5 |
| <i>Historically black</i> | 38 | 15 | 38 | 3 | 6 |
| Catholic | 17 | 8 | 68 | 3 | 4 |
| Orthodox Christian | 26 | 6 | 59 | 2 | 7 |
| Mormon | 57 | 6 | 31 | 2 | 3 |
| Jehovah's Witness | 83 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 9 |

Source: 2014 Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30, 2014. QH1/QH2. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Asked only of Christians.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

7. What factors do you think contribute to so many Christians believing that there are other ways to heaven besides Jesus?
8. How does religious pluralism or universalism impact the way that we share our faith today? How might it hurt our efforts? How might it help our efforts?
9. Contrast the two kinds of “ways” described in the following passages:
- Matthew 7:13-14

¹³ “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”



- Proverbs 2:9-15
 - ⁹ Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—every good path.
 - ¹⁰ For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.
 - ¹¹ Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.
 - ¹² Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse,
 - ¹³ who have left the straight paths to walk in dark ways,
 - ¹⁴ who delight in doing wrong and rejoice in the perverseness of evil,
 - ¹⁵ whose paths are crooked and who are devious in their ways.

- Proverbs 16:2,25
 - ² All a person's ways seem pure to them, but motives are weighed by the LORD.
 - ²⁵ There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.

Taking It Home

10. When might Jesus' words in this lesson be especially meaningful to you?

11. Write a prayer, expressing the comfort you find in this name for Jesus.