

## Lesson Seven: The Way, the Truth, and The Life

**Main idea:** Jesus is comfort and certainty in an uncertain world.

### Teacher preparation:

- Read Scripture references.
- Gather: Bible; dry erase markers or chart paper and markers; 5-10 pieces of string, each between 10-20 feet; painters tape; 5-10 random objects and toys for the game; a Bible or cross for the game; small prizes for the game; old roadmaps or a map book and atlases; scrapbook paper; scissors; glue sticks; pencils; black markers
- Take time to meditate on this week's Scripture and think about your own life. When you are unsure of what lies ahead of you in life, do you turn for truth, for directions to Jesus, or to the world?

### Scripture references:

- John 13:33-14:6
- Acts 4:12
- Romans 10:9
- 1 John 5:20
- John 3:16
- **Game:** Finding the Way to the Truth
- This game is a life-size version of a follow-the-line maze. (the type of maze where a bunch of lines are jumbled up on the page and you have to follow the correct line to the end.) Set up the game before kids arrive. To set up this life-size version, arrange several lengths of string around the room. Loop them through chairs, under tables, and tape them to the walls with painters tape. Make sure the strings cross over one another. Some strings can even loop back and connect to themselves. Attach random items to the ends of the strings, like shoes or books or toys. To the end of the winning string, attach a Bible or a decorative cross. To play, have students (either in teams or individually) choose one string and follow it to its end. Have the student(s) who find the Bible or cross win a small prize, if you choose.
- **Message:**

- Open in prayer, then say, for the past several weeks, we have been learning about the seven I AM statements Jesus made, which are recorded in the book of John. Each time Jesus says “I AM,” he is saying that he is God. Each I AM statement also reveals to us a new part of Jesus’ character. It tells us a little more about who Jesus is. We have learned that he is the Bread of Life, and fills up all our spiritual needs. We have also learned that he is the Light of the World, and he lights up our spiritual darkness. We learned that Jesus is the door to the sheepfold, and the only entrance to salvation and the Good Shepherd who sacrificed his life for our lives. Last week we learned that Jesus is the resurrection and the life, and that he has all power over life and death. Today’s I AM statement has three parts. This is probably a statement that you have heard before.
- Today, we are going to dig really deep into what Jesus meant by today’s I AM statement, and what he meant by the conversation he was having with his disciples when he made this I AM statement. Today I am going to read a chunk of Scripture to you. This is a conversation Jesus had with his disciples at the Last Supper. The disciples didn’t know that this would be their last meal with Jesus. They just thought they were eating the Passover meal with their best friend and teacher. As I read, imagine you are in the upper room with Jesus and the disciples, eating the meal around a low table, sitting on a cushion on the floor. Imagine what the disciples must have felt as they had this conversation with Jesus. I want you to practice careful listening, so I have a job for you. As you picture yourself in the story, listen to my words. When you hear me say “love,” give yourself a big hug. (On the board, write LOVE then draw an arrow pointing to the word HUG.) When you hear me say “going” or “go,” clap your hands ONE time. (On the board, write GOING then draw an arrow pointing to CLAP ONCE.) Last, when you hear Jesus make his I AM statement, give me two thumbs up. (Write “I AM” on the board, with an arrow pointing to “thumbs up.”) This last one is going to be tricky, since Jesus says “I am” in other parts of this conversation, so you have to think carefully about what he is saying before giving a thumbs up. (Review the directions on the board before reading.) Now close your eyes, or follow along in your Bible and listen closely as I read John 13:33-14:18. (As you read, put an emphasis on the words “love,” “go,” “going” and the I AM statement in 14:6.)
- <sup>33</sup>Dear children, I will be with you only a little longer. And as I told the Jewish leaders, you will search for me, but you can’t come where I am

going. <sup>34</sup> So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. <sup>35</sup> Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”

- <sup>36</sup> Simon Peter asked, “Lord, where are you going?”
- And Jesus replied, “You can’t go with me now, but you will follow me later.”
- <sup>37</sup> “But why can’t I come now, Lord?” he asked. “I’m ready to die for you.”
- <sup>38</sup> Jesus answered, “Die for me? I tell you the truth, Peter—before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me.
- 14 “Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. <sup>2</sup> There is more than enough room in my Father’s home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup> When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. <sup>4</sup> And you know the way to where I am going.”
- <sup>5</sup> “No, we don’t know, Lord,” Thomas said. “We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?”
- <sup>6</sup> Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.
- Great listening, everyone! You did a good job catching the words “love” and “going.” Who can tell me what today’s I AM statement is? (Let a student respond.) That’s right, today we are learning what Jesus meant when he said “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” There is a lot to cover in the time we have left, so let’s jump right in! I already told you that this conversation took place only with Jesus and his disciples, the people who believed him and followed him. Up until now, Jesus has always spoke publicly, where everyone around could hear his I AM statements. Sometimes people believed him and started to follow him, other times they got angry with him. Today’s I AM statement is different because it was meant for the ears of his disciples only. His public

ministry has come to an end. Soon, he will give up his life to save all of mankind from our sin. I asked you before I read today's scripture to imagine you were in the room, listening to this conversation. I asked you to imagine what you think the disciples must have been feeling. So tell me now, how do you think the disciples felt when Jesus told them he would be going away? (Allow a few students to answer. Write their responses on the board. Good responses include sad, scared, worried, and confused.) We can't know exactly how they felt, because the Bible does not tell us, but one thing is for sure, they were not feeling good, happy feelings. As disciples, our desire is to be with Jesus all the time, everywhere. The apostles gave up everything, their homes and families, to follow Jesus. Now they are afraid to lose him. What would life be like if they could no longer walk with him, side by side? So Jesus, in John 13:34 gives them, gives us, a new commandment. He tells us to love one another, just like he has loved us. The disciples probably needed that reminder at the time. It's harder to show love to others when you are worried or scared. This is one of the final things Jesus says to his disciples: love one another. This is so important for us to remember.

- The disciples are getting a little worried. Jesus just said, "I will be with you only a little longer...you can't come where I am going." You may have noticed in our text that the disciples mention a few times that they don't know where Jesus is going. I find it interesting that Jesus never gives them a direct answer. If your mom says, "I'm going out," and you ask her where, she is probably going to tell you a place, like the grocery store. At the very least, she'll tell you it's a surprise. It's not likely that your mom will not answer you. Jesus here does not tell them where they are going because he has told them before, using many parables, and later on in our text, he gives us a good hint. Look at verse two of chapter fourteen. Jesus mentions his father's house. Who is the father? God, of course! So who can guess where Jesus is going? (Allow responses.) Jesus is going to where God the father is. He is going to heaven to prepare a place for us. That is exciting news! Have any of you ever travelled to stay with family, or had family come into town to stay at your house? Do you just leave your house a mess, and not do anything to prepare for your guests? Of course not! Chances are, you and your family put in extra effort to make your house look nice for your guests. You may buy their favorite foods or set out fresh flowers to make the house look even more welcoming. Jesus is comforting his disciples when he says that he is going to prepare room for them in the Father's house. Imagine a mansion, or a great, big castle. That is one picture of

what heaven will be like! It is a great big place with plenty of room for everyone who has ever loved and followed Jesus. We'll be one big, happy family together with our heavenly Father!

- After Jesus tells his disciples this comforting news, he tells them that they know the way to where he is going. The disciples are still uncertain and confused. Thomas says, "No, we don't know, Lord. We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?" This is where Jesus makes his second to last I AM statement. He says "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."
- Let's take this statement apart piece by piece. "I am the way." (Write "the way" on the board.) What does Jesus mean? The way to what? (Allow students to answer.) Based on what we were just discussing, Jesus is the only way to God, the Father. Jesus is the only way to heaven. Have any of you ever gotten lost? (Allow a few students to share briefly.) It can be scary when you don't know how to get back to your mom and dad. What would you prefer: would you rather have someone give you directions on how to get back to your mom and dad, "go down this road, make a left, go three blocks and make a right." Or would you rather have someone take you by the hand and lead you back to your mom and dad, not leaving your side until you were safe in your parents' arms? (Let children answer.) I know that when I am lost, I would rather have someone show me the way instead of just tell me how to get there. Jesus leads us to the Father. He doesn't say that he knows the way, he says he IS the way. It's like having a GPS in your car or on your phone. All you have to do is type in where you want to go, and a good GPS will guide you through every twist and turn. The other part of this is the little word that comes before "way" in our text. That word is "THE." Jesus says he is THE way to heaven. A lot of people in the world want to say that there are lots of ways to get to heaven. They say that you just have to believe you are right, no matter what you believe, or that you have to be a good person, or that all gods people worship will lead them to heaven. It seems like a nice way to believe, but not everyone can be right. There is only one way to get to heaven, and that is through Jesus. Let's have a sword drill to look up a verse to help prove that. Take your fingers and bookmarks out of your Bibles. When I say go, look up Acts 4:12. Go! (Read, or have a student read, Acts 4:12.) "There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved." The only name that

can save us is the name JESUS. He is the only true God, and the only way for us to be saved from our sins. Romans 10:9 says, "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Jesus is the only way to heaven. (Add "only" between "the" and "way" on the board.) We follow him when we confess that he is Lord. As his followers, we can be comforted knowing he will never lead us astray.

- Next, Jesus says he is "the truth." (Write "the truth." on the board.) Now we look at another common thing the world would like us to believe. People want to get us to believe things like "truth is relative," "truth is whatever you believe it to be," and "you can't know for certain that anything is true." People who say things like that seem to be awfully sure that you can't know anything for sure. Let's disprove that right here and now. Answer a few quick questions for me. (Pause between each question to allow the class to respond in unison.) What color is the board? What season is it? What is your name? What is two plus two? What was the date yesterday? You all know a lot of things for sure! But how do you know for sure? It's pretty obvious, isn't it? You can prove that two plus two equals four by counting on your fingers. You can prove what your name is by looking at your birth certificate, or when you're older, your driver's license. You can prove what color the board is just by looking at it. We can prove that Jesus is the truth by looking at the Bible and at his life. Let's be smart about how we think about this. C.S. Lewis, the guy who wrote "The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe" made a very good argument defending that Jesus is the truth. He said that Jesus can be one of three things. He's either a liar, a lunatic, or he is the Lord. It doesn't make sense that he's a liar. Everything about himself that he said would happen, did. He was betrayed and he did die and he came back to life. He was even able to tell things about people that no one else knew. Jesus is no liar. Then is he a lunatic? He Jesus just some crazy person? Crazy people don't sound as reasonable as Jesus. The stories Jesus told and the actions he lived by are not things that crazy people do. So that leaves us one good option: Jesus is who he says he is. He is the Lord. He is God. Jesus tells the truth about who he is. Jesus IS the truth. 1 John 5:20 puts it this way: "And we know that the Son of God has come, and he has given us understanding so that we can know the true God. And now we live in fellowship with the true God because we live in fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the only true God, and he is eternal life."

- This leads us into the last part of our lesson. We'll only spend a minute on this, because we have studied it in previous lessons. The last part of today's I AM statement is when Jesus says, "I am the life." (Write "the life" on the board.) Jesus isn't saying that he gives us a good life, he is saying that life is only found in him. And the life that we find in Jesus will last forever. Like John 3:16 says, "For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."
- So, to close, we learn from this I AM statement that Jesus is everything we need. He is the way to God, he is the only truth, and he is eternal life. When life is scary, when we are confused or worried, this I AM statement brings us comfort. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. He is the certainty and comfort we need in an uncertain world.
- **Craft:** Road Map Collages
- Cut out (or have the children cut out) squares from old road maps or atlases. Have the students glue these squares onto a cardstock or scrapbook paper background. Then they will write "'I am the way, the truth, and the life.' John 14:6" using dark marker. Then they can decorate the rest of their collage using scrapbook paper and other pretty papers. Encourage them to add crosses, arrows (pointing the way), Bibles, doves, and other Christian symbols using the decorative paper.