

Jesus is the Great I AM

Main idea: Jesus is the holy, perfectly perfect God. We are who we are as Christians because Jesus is the great I AM.

Key Verses:

God replied to Moses, "I Am Who I Am."

Exodus 3:14

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I Am!"

John 8:58

Teacher preparation:

- Read Scripture references, John 8:31-59 and Psalm 103.
- Gather: Bible, dry erase markers or chart paper and markers, cards for charades, scarf and staff or walking stick for Moses, burning bush cutout, crayons, markers, single hole punch, red ribbon, scissors, white card stock, clear packaging tape.
- Make cards for "Who Am I charades" using index cards. All of the cards must be characters, real or imaginary. You can make them as simple as a horse, or you can choose to do cartoon characters, such as Mickey Mouse, or Olaf from Frozen.
- Draw and cut out a burning bush from cardboard or poster board.
- Take time to meditate on this week's Scripture and think about your own life. In what ways have you allowed the Great I AM to provide for your needs? Prayerfully read through Psalm 103 and reflect on the statements the Psalmist makes about the LORD.
- Prepare for the craft by cutting several sheets of card stock into fourths. Have enough rectangles cut out for each student to have a least one, with a few extras in case of mistakes. Practice cutting out cross shapes as described in the craft. Download below.

Scripture references:

- Exodus 3:1-17
- John 8:54-59

Game: Who Am I charades.

Students will take turns drawing cards from a stack and silently acting out the character on the card. As the student acts, the rest of the class will raise their hands if they think they know who the actor is being. You may call on them one by one. Alternatively, you may allow the children to shout out the answer, and whoever gets it right first gets to act out a character next. For younger children, you may consider allowing them to speak as they act out their character. Play until every child has had a turn or until you run out of time, about ten or fifteen minutes.

JESUS is the Great I AM Lesson

Open in prayer, then say,

Today we are starting a new series that will help us get to know Jesus even better. First, I want to ask you a question. Who are you? (Allow a few children to respond, then introduce yourself with your name.) I know all your names and you know mine, but is that all there is to who you are? Are you just a name, sitting in a chair? No, of course not! Your name is not the only thing that defines you. For example, I am a teacher. Sometimes people call me “teacher.” Some of you may be called “brother” or “sister” or “friend” or “niece” or “nephew” or “son” or “daughter.” You may be called “soccer player, artist, piano player, student, or dancer.” These titles help describe who you are. We can get to know people a little better when we know some of the other names people use to describe them. Now, who is the person we want to know better than anyone else in the whole wide world? Jesus! Did you know that Jesus gives us some very special ways to describe him in the Bible, too? In the book of John in the Bible, Jesus gives us seven descriptions of himself. Each of these seven descriptions tell us a little bit more about the character of Jesus, about who he is. Each of these seven statements also starts with the two words “I AM.” That may seem pretty obvious. Of course it starts out with “I AM!” I start out describing myself by saying “I am,” too. “I am a teacher. I am a writer. I am a wife.” There is a difference, however, in me saying “I am” and Jesus saying “I AM.” The words “I AM” have a special meaning in the Bible, and that is what we are going to look at today.

It starts way back in the second book of Bible, Exodus. I need two volunteers to help act out this story. As I read, one student will be Moses (give the first volunteer a staff and scarf to wear around their head.) And another will be the angel of the LORD speaking through the burning bush. (Hand the second volunteer the cardboard cutout of a burning bush.) My two volunteers will silently act out the story as I read. They will not make any noise, but they must listen closely so they know what to do as I read. Everyone in the audience will watch silently as I read. (Read Exodus 3:1-17, pausing as necessary to allow the volunteers to act out their part or to give direction. The following is taken from the New Living Translation.)

¹One day Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led the flock far into the wilderness and came to Sinai, the mountain of God. ²There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the middle of a bush. Moses stared in amazement. Though the bush was engulfed in flames, it didn't burn up. ³"This is amazing," Moses said to himself. "Why isn't that bush burning up? I must go see it."

⁴When the Lord saw Moses coming to take a closer look, God called to him from the middle of the bush, "Moses! Moses!"

"Here I am!" Moses replied.

⁵"Do not come any closer," the Lord warned. "Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground. ⁶I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." When Moses heard this, he covered his face because he was afraid to look at God.

⁷Then the Lord told him, "I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries of distress because of their harsh slave drivers. Yes, I am aware of their suffering. ⁸So I

have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and lead them out of Egypt into their own fertile and spacious land. It is a land flowing with milk and honey—the land where the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites now live. ⁹ Look! The cry of the people of Israel has reached me, and I have seen how harshly the Egyptians abuse them. ¹⁰ Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You must lead my people Israel out of Egypt.”

¹¹ But Moses protested to God, “Who am I to appear before Pharaoh? Who am I to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt?”

¹² God answered, “I will be with you. And this is your sign that I am the one who has sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God at this very mountain.”

¹³ But Moses protested, “If I go to the people of Israel and tell them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ they will ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what should I tell them?”

¹⁴ God replied to Moses, “I Am Who I Am. Say this to the people of Israel: I Am has sent me to you.” ¹⁵ God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: Yahweh, the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.

*This is my eternal name,
my name to remember for all generations.*

¹⁶“Now go and call together all the elders of Israel. Tell them, ‘The Lord, the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—has appeared to me. He told me, “I have been watching closely, and I see how the Egyptians are treating you. ¹⁷I have promised to rescue you from your oppression in Egypt. I will lead you to a land flowing with milk and honey—the land where the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites now live.””

Exodus 3:1-17 NLT

Let's give three big claps for our volunteers! In this story, we hear God give what he calls his eternal name, his “name to remember for all generations.” What was that name? “I AM,” that's right. Now really smart people have discussed what exactly this means for hundreds of years, and it basically comes down to this. When God says he is “I AM,” or “I AM WHO I AM,” He means that nothing and no one can ever change his character. He has always been the perfect and loving God, he is the perfect loving God right now, and he will always be the perfect and loving God forever, no matter what. He is perfectly perfect and relies on no one and no thing to make him perfect. When we see God refer to himself as I AM, or Yahweh, or the LORD in all capital letters in the Bible, it is God's way of reminding us that he is perfect, and he is all we will ever need for anything in life.

It is important to remember that the I AM name of God, Yahweh, or the LORD, (write the LORD in all capitals on the board,) is a very special name of God. It is holy. This means that it is set apart. We have to be respectful of God's I AM name. We show we respect adults by using ma'am or sir when we talk to them. One way we show God we respect him is in how we use his special I AM name. A long time ago, when Jewish people would read the Old Testament out loud, they would not say the I AM name, Yahweh, because they knew it is special, holy and set apart. Instead, they would bow their heads and say the LORD. Some people today still see the I AM name of God as so holy, they do not want to say it, as a way of showing how special and set apart God is. Instead of saying the holy and special name of God, they say the LORD and remember that God is perfectly perfect and provides for everything we need.

God first calls himself I AM in the Old Testament of the Bible. He uses it to tell Moses how he, God, is the only one who can help the Israelites get out of Egypt. God promises to redeem them from their captivity and provide them a home, filled with everything they can ever need. In the New Testament, we learn about Jesus, God's Son. Jesus also has a lot of names he goes by, and all of these names help us learn a little more about who he is. Let's look in the gospel of John, where Jesus surprises everybody by using the I AM name. In the scene leading up to what I am about to read, Jesus is telling the crowd how they can be set free from their sins by following him, but the crowd is arguing with him because they don't really want to hear the truth, they just want to hear things to make them feel better about themselves. Jesus has a strong response to them. Listen closely to see how the crowd reacts to Jesus' words. Follow along as I read from John 8:54-59.

⁵⁴ Jesus answered, "If I want glory for myself, it doesn't count. But it is my Father who will glorify me. You say, 'He is our God,' ⁵⁵ but you don't even know him. I know him. If I said otherwise, I would be as great a liar as you! But I do know him and obey him. ⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced as he looked forward to my coming. He saw it and was glad."

⁵⁷ The people said, "You aren't even fifty years old. How can you say you have seen Abraham?"

⁵⁸ Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I Am!" ⁵⁹ At that point they picked up stones to throw at him. But Jesus was hidden from them and left the Temple."

John 8:54-59

How did the crowd react when Jesus said, "before Abraham was even born, I Am?" (Allow a student to answer.) They were going to throw rocks at him, to kill him! Why do you think they wanted to kill Jesus? (Allow a student or two to answer.) We just said that the I AM name of God is holy and set apart, so much so that some people won't even say the name. When Jesus said he is I AM, he is saying that he is God. We all know that Jesus is God, but the

people in Jesus' time did not want to believe it. They thought he was lying, and back then, saying you were God was such a terrible crime, they could kill you for it. Jesus knew that, but he was not lying. When he said he is I AM, he knew that he was saying he is God. Jesus is perfectly perfect. Jesus has always been the perfect and loving God, Jesus is the perfect loving God right now, and Jesus will always be the perfect and loving God forever, no matter what. Jesus is perfectly perfect and relies on no one and no thing to make him perfect.

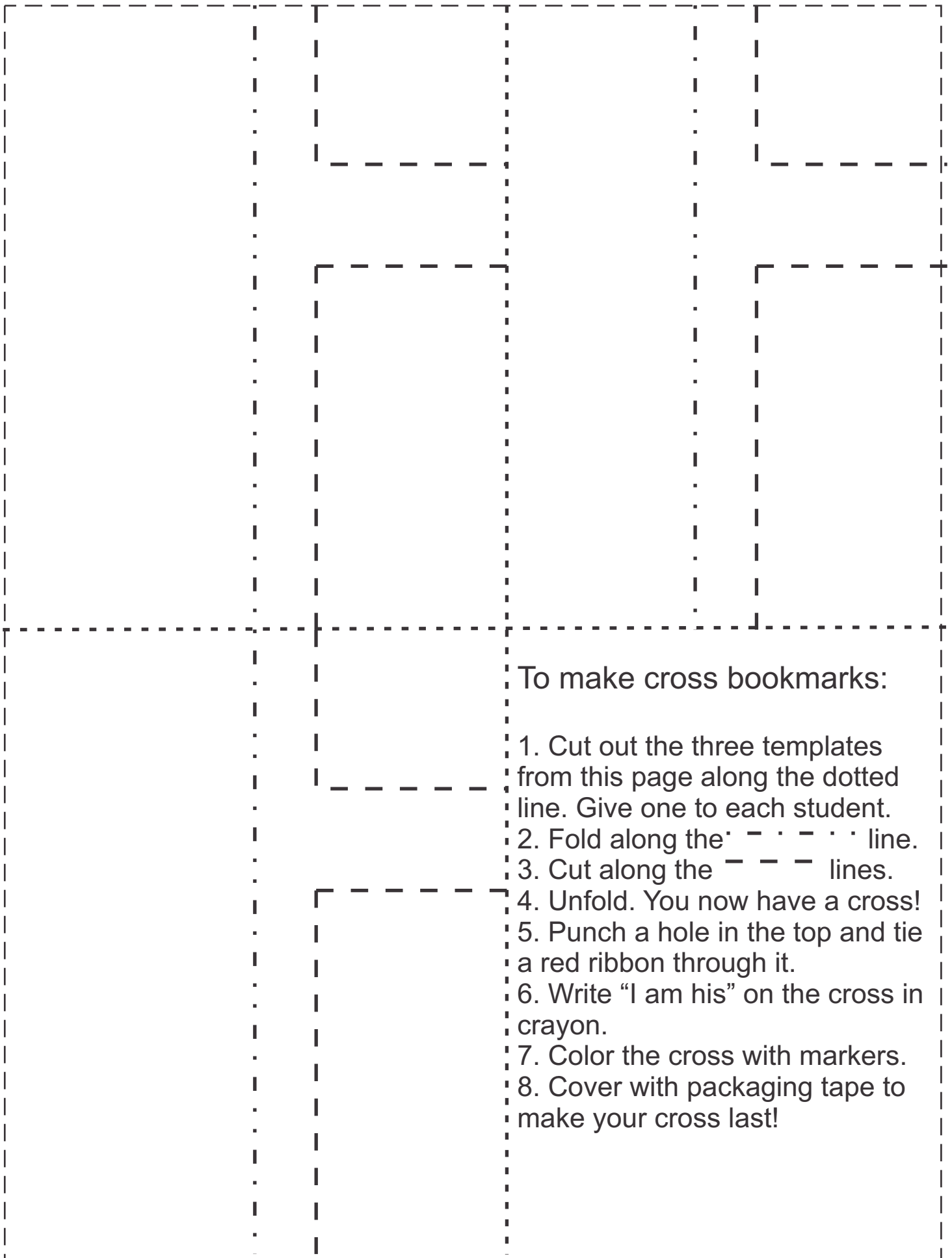
Isn't that the best news ever? The perfect God who lives forever loves us so much that he became a little baby boy, and grew up. He never did anything wrong. He lived the perfect life. He loved and served everyone he met. He loves and serves us, too! Jesus is the perfect God. Because of that, people killed him. But since he is the perfect God who needs no one and no thing to make him perfect, he came back to life! He did all of this to save us from our sins. He lived and died and came back to life because he loves us, and wants us to love him and live with him forever. All we have to do is believe that Jesus is I AM, the perfect God who loves us. We show that we love him by loving others and serving others just like he did. Over the next seven weeks, we are going to learn about seven ways Jesus describes himself. Each description begins with I Am, and when we hear that, we remember that Jesus is God. He provides for our every need. The seven I AM statements of Jesus show us just how he does that. As we learn about the seven I AM statements Jesus makes, we will remember that Jesus is the holy, perfectly perfect God. And when we love him and ask him to forgive us of our sins, we can say, "I AM HIS!" We belong to Jesus when we follow him. He will protect us and provide for us. As Christians, we are who we are because of who Jesus is. It is wonderful to know that he is the great I AM!

End in prayer.



Craft: "I am his" bookmarks.

Make bookmarks into a cross shape. Fold a rectangle of card stock an half, long side to long side. (Hot dog style.) Where the two sides meet, (NOT along the fold, but opposite it,) cut out two rectangles. On the upper corner, cut out a shorter rectangle. On the lower corner, cut out a longer rectangle. The rectangles must be the same width. Unfold, and you should have a cross shape. Use a single hole punch to make a hole near the top of the cross. Thread a length of red ribbon through the hole and tie it. Tell the kids the red ribbon reminds us of the blood Jesus shed for us when he died on the cross

for our sins. Have the children write "I am his" across the cross using a crayon. (Write the phrase on the board for younger students to copy.) From there, have the kids decorate the crosses as they wish, using washable markers. The markers can go right over the top of the words with no trouble, so the words will stand out clearly no matter how the kids color. For added durability, cover the bookmark, front and back, in clear packaging tape.



To make cross bookmarks:

1. Cut out the three templates from this page along the dotted line. Give one to each student.
2. Fold along the  line.
3. Cut along the  lines.
4. Unfold. You now have a cross!
5. Punch a hole in the top and tie a red ribbon through it.
6. Write "I am his" on the cross in crayon.
7. Color the cross with markers.
8. Cover with packaging tape to make your cross last!