

The I AM Sayings of Jesus

An OURUF Bible Study

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Not much of this material is original or unique since we are striving to present historic Christianity to the 21st Century world. Therefore, we are building on the shoulders of those who have gone before us. Please feel free to use this material in discussions with others and even in other Bible studies. Feel free to adapt and modify for your own purposes.

***For more information about RUF at the University of Oklahoma, visit our website:
www.ouruf.org***

Scripture taken from the English Standard Version

RUF at OU – Who are We?

Many people ask what we at RUF believe. Sometimes the questions are asked in these ways: What are the theological distinctives? What does Reformed mean? What denomination are you a part of? Are those issues even important? Do we, in our theological tradition, care about evangelism and discipleship?

While this document may not answer every question, the staff and members of RUF want to answer every question and help people learn about RUF and its mission and distinctives. We are convinced that RUF must not be so broadly open that it fails to make vitally important distinctives, which the Bible itself makes; nor are we to insist that every member share the same precise set of theological convictions.

RUF is and will be characterized accurately with the following terms:

We are Evangelical

To say that we are evangelical means that we take our stand with all those who believe in what used to be called the “fundamentals”: the existence of the triune God, the deity of Jesus, the virgin birth, the substitutionary atonement and the vicarious atonement of Christ, the physical resurrection of Christ, the sure return of Christ and the divine authority of the Bible which is a faithful and true guide to what we are to believe and how we are to live. We joyfully affirm our unity with those from every tradition and denomination who hold to these fundamentals, and the other various campus ministries in which we joyfully agree with on the essential issues.

We are Evangelistic

This means that we take seriously the Great Commission, “Go and make disciples of all nations.” Without compromising the sovereignty of God, we affirm the responsibility of each person to repent and believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and our responsibility to extend the Gospel (see the link to What is the Gospel) invitation as a call to salvation to everyone who hears its message. We invite all, without distinction, to drink freely of the Water of Life and to live eternally with God. In this way, we see to “extend the transforming presence of the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.” You will see evangelism taking place in large group, small group and one-on-one settings in the various forms available to us. Since the Gospel is everything to us, it will permeate everything we do.

We Love Discipleship

This is the other aspect of the Great Commission, “Go and make disciples of all nations.” Discipleship is a term that is “in” these days. At RUF we seek to disciple believers by equipping them to know Christ ever deeper, to seek repentance as the norm of Christian life, to understand and commit to the Scriptures (in large-group, small-group and one-on-one settings), to become involved in the ministry and mission of RUF and the church, to learn to read the Scriptures and pray in personal times with God, to engage with culture with a Christian worldview and a gospel lens, to invite others to the living water that only Jesus provides their thirsting souls. These things take time and cannot always be evaluated easily. People who wish to “be discipled” tend to look like this: they pursue time with Doug and Julie and of older believers in RUF and in the church, they attend church regularly and are a vital part of that body of believers, they read the Bible, they attend RUF as a place to grow and also as a place to minister to others, they have non-believing friends, they repent often because they realize they are enormous sinners, they display the fruits of the Spirit as Christ works His life through them, they jump in an help out to meet the needs of others an of the ministry, they made difficult choices in order to glorify God, they are growing in their understanding of who God is on a theological level and that is melting their hearts so they love Him and others more. You can see that discipleship isn’t really a program, but a way of life. It isn’t an hour a week, but an attitude of placing yourself at the feet of Jesus and following what He says. We seek to be disciples and to disciple others to have this kind of lifestyle.

We are Reformed

The word “reformed” can be defined simply in two ways: 1) It is a reference to our historical link to the Reformation of the 16th century and intends to describe us as heirs of that tradition which comes from

Luther, Calvin, Knox and other reformers. 2) The word “reformed” is used most commonly to refer to certain theological distinctives which have marked reformation believers.

These distinctives can be summarized by our glad affirmation of the responsibility of every person to repent and believe, and that it is God who, by His sovereign electing grace, draws men and women, otherwise dead in sin, to faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. By this faith alone are God’s people justified.

Reformed distinctives include the sovereignty of God in His creation, providence and election of believers apart from any merit of their own, the irresistible grace of God provided for and preceding the faith of the individual; the sufficiency of God’s grace apart from which man is dead in sin and wholly defiled in all his faculties of soul and body; the efficacy of Christ’s death for all those who believe in Him by grace; the life-guarding of all those whom Christ died for eternal life.

We are Kingdom-Centered

We believe that the Kingdom of God is not only a future hope but is also a present reality. We believe that the ascension of Jesus Christ means that He is presently reigning from Heaven and therefore, we are called upon to honor Christ’s Kingdom rule in every area of human endeavor. We believe the church is the institution through which God is building His kingdom and is renewing every aspect of life. Every Christian has a unique calling and a unique giftedness to serve others in his or her community. Christians should demonstrate this by serving others and working with excellence, for God’s glory, in all that they do.

We Seek Transformation

We believe that the Gospel has the power to change us. That as we seek Christ and not ourselves, that profound changes take place in our understanding of who God is, who we are and how we are supposed to interact with the world. God saves us. But why? Paul writes in Ephesians 2:8-10, “For it by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this is not from yourselves. It is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” God has created us, saved us from the bondage of sin, in order that we might bring Him glory in everything we do. That is quite a lot. At RUF, we will continue to seek the practical application of the gospel to every area of life. However, we do not want to slip into a legalism, thinking that our applications are THE applications that every Christian should and must make. We want to seek out what God says and then hold that up, instead of manmade rules and criteria. We want to steer the middle, Biblical course between being able to do anything we selfishly want to do, and erecting too many rules that shield out true Christian freedom. Admittedly, this is not easy, but we seek to engage each other without a judging spirit, in true discussion about applying the Bible, and admitting our own sinfulness and need for the Gospel.

We are, and Our Campus Minister is, Confessional

This means that we have a written confession of faith which our campus minister and the PCA (the Presbyterian Church in America, the denomination which RUF comes from) believes to be a good and accurate summary of the Bible’s teaching. Our confession consists of the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms (you can link to those documents by clicking [here](#)) are in no way considered infallible; yet we believe they do contain carefully worded summaries of the Bible’s teaching in a systematic way. All ruling and teaching elders in the PCA must vow that they hold to these standards and are required to indicate to their presbyteries or sessions where they take exceptions. It is important to note that every church and campus ministry has a confession, formal or informal, even though some claim they have “no confession but Christ” or “no creed but the Bible” or are “non-doctrinal.” Every church and campus ministry summarizes its convictions in some form in order to distinguish its members from those who are not believers or who do not believe in its distinctives. Though this discussion may seem inconsequential, it is actually very important. Because you know PCA pastors are held accountable to the Westminster Confession and to a strict standard for ordination, you know what it is you are getting when you sit under their teaching. Though there are differences in each pastor’s gifts and personalities and there are also debatable issues within the Scriptures, there is an extremely large area of uniformity in understanding and acceptance because of the confessional approach to ordination and continued pastoring.

We are Presbyterian

This word refers to our form of government, though you won't see it much affect RUF meetings or your involvement. You should know, however, that we believe that the most clear biblical pattern is for churches to be governed by presbyters (elders) who rule jointly in what are called "church courts": sessions, presbyteries and the General Assembly. This means that RUF at OU, and its campus minister is connected and accountable to the other pastors in the presbytery as they seek to serve Christ and minister together for His glory. RUF at OU isn't just "out there" on its own.

We are a Community

RUF is not a place where you should expect to "attend meetings." We believe that the teaching and preaching of the Word of God are at the core of what we do, but that those activities take place in the context of a community. This community involves authenticity, admitting our sinfulness, asking questions of ourselves and others, taking risks in initiating and continuing relationships, forgiveness, an appreciation of our and others' gifts and using them in the body of Christ, in inviting others to join us, in having fun and taking road trips, in rejoicing and crying together.

This is important because...

It is important to know that these distinctives are good ones; that is to say, it is profitable and health-producing for Christians to believe these things. We believe that as we come to appreciate them, we will grow to love and honor the Lord Jesus more fully and understand more richly what it means to live by grace.

Nevertheless, acceptance of all these distinctives is in no way required for participation in RUF or in membership with any PCA church. One can be involved without holding to any (though we will seek to promote the evangelical distinctives over all the others).

In the Reformation era, Martin Luther had a sponsor whose name was Fredrick of Saxony. Fredrick was a prince and a 16th century entrepreneur who funded many of Luther's projects. He was a man of warm heart and deep conviction. On his coach, he had emblazoned these Latin words: *suaviter in modo, fortiter in re*, which means, "gentle in manner, strong in truth." This is what RUF at OU desires to be: warm, gracious, inviting, open and non-judgmental; yet holding strong convictions that always come directly from the Bible. It is our absolute and unwavering conviction that to be strong in truth without being gentle in manner is unbiblical. It is also our profound conviction that to be gentle in manner while not adhering to scriptural truth is also unbiblical. By God's grace we will be both as we press on in the Lord's grand design for RUF at OU to be used at OU, in Norman and to the world.

The Gospel

At RUF, the gospel is our greatest treasure – it truly is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, and that continues all throughout our Christian lives. However, in our day and culture, there is confusion as to just what the gospel is. The following article, written by Pastor Tim Keller of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, clearly defines the gospel.

The Third Way of the Gospel

The Gospel means “good news.” It is the basic message that: ‘God made (Christ), who had no sin, to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God’ (2 Cor. 5:21). The gospel says that we are so sinful, lost and helpless that only the life and death of the Son of God can save us. But it also says that those who trust in Christ’s work instead of their own efforts are now “holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation” (Colossians 1:22-23).

The gospel tells us that our root sin is not just failing in our obedience to God but relying on our obedience to save us. Therefore, the gospel is a “third way,” neither religion nor irreligion. The religious person may say, “I am doing the right things that God commands”¹ and the irreligious person may say, “I decide what is right and wrong for myself.” But both ways reject Jesus as Savior (though they may revere him as Example or Helper). Both ways are strategies of self-salvation – both actually keep control of their own lives. So the gospel keeps us from legalism and moralism on the one hand and from hedonism and relativism on the other.

The Gospel’s Power for Change

The gospel is not just the ABC but the A-Z of the Christian life. The gospel is not just the way to enter the kingdom but is the way to address every problem and is the way to grow at every step. If we believe we can find our own worth and meaning through performance, then we will become either proud or disdainful of others (if we reach our goals), or else discouraged and self-loathing (if we fail our goals). But the gospel creates an entirely new self-image.

First, it tells us that we are more wicked and sinful than we ever dared believe but more loved and accepted in Christ than we ever dared to hope – at the same time. In fact, if the gospel is true, the more you see you sin, the more certain you are that you were saved by sheer grace and the more precious and electrifying that grace is to you.

So the gospel gives us enormous power to admit our flaws. Then secondly, the knowledge of our acceptance in Christ makes (for the first time) the law of God a beauty instead of a burden. We come to use it to delight the One who has enriched us so mightily, instead of using it to get his attention or win his favor. The first way makes the moral and sacrificial life a joy; the second way makes it a burden.

Therefore the gospel changes everything. It brings down racial barriers by melting away facial pride or inferiority. It brings down psychological problems by melting away self-inflation or self-hatred. It brings down personal facades, for we are free to admit who we are. It effects the way we do everything... how we motivate people, how we help them work through counseling problems, how we worship, how we take criticism.

¹ “Our core problem, say St. Augustine, is that the human heart, ignoring God, turns in on itself, tries to lift itself, wants to please itself, and ends up debasing itself. The person who reaches toward God and wants to please God gets, so to speak, stretched by this move, and ennobled by the transcendence of its object. But the person who curves in on himself, who wants God’s gifts without God, who wants to satisfy the desires of a divided heart, ends up sagging and contracting like a little wad. He desires are provincial. ‘There is something in humility which, strangely enough, exalts the heart, and something in pride, which debases it.’” - Cornelius Plantinga, *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be*, p. 62, (at the end quoting Augustine, *The City of God*)

I am the Bread of Life

John 6:22-59

²² On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. ²³ Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. ²⁴ So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.

²⁵ When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?”
²⁶ Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. ²⁷ Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.” ²⁸ Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” ²⁹ Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” ³⁰ So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?” ³¹ Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” ³² Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” ³⁴ They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”

³⁵ Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. ³⁶ But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. ³⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰ For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

⁴¹ So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” ⁴² They said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’” ⁴³ Jesus answered them, “Do not grumble among yourselves. ⁴⁴ No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me— ⁴⁶ not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. ⁴⁷ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. ⁵⁰ This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

⁵² The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” ⁵³ So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴ Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. ⁵⁵ For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶ Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. ⁵⁷ As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” ⁵⁹ Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the context for this discourse? Why are the crowds following Jesus? How do we act like the crowd?
2. What does Jesus say about the manna eaten by the Israelites in the wilderness? (Exodus 16:15-21) Do you think that Jesus, the bread of life, can really satisfy you? Are we like the Israelites who tried to store up more?
3. How does Jesus answer the crowd?
4. What kinds of things do we associate with bread?
5. What does it mean that Jesus is the bread of life? What is he revealing about himself in his answers?
6. How do we respond in faith to Jesus as the bread of life? What does Jesus tell us to do in verses 51-57?
7. What might eating of the bread of heaven remind us of?

I am the Light of the World

John 8:12-20

¹²Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." ¹³So the Pharisees said to him, "You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true." ¹⁴Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. ¹⁵You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. ¹⁶Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. ¹⁷In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. ¹⁸I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me." ¹⁹They said to him therefore, "Where is your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also." ²⁰These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

John 9:1-7

¹As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ²And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." ⁶Having said these things, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud ⁷and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

Questions for Discussion

1. Name as many praise songs as we can with that talk about light. What are other examples of light in the Bible? How does this idea of Jesus as the Light relate to them? Read Exodus 13:21-22, 14:29-25.
2. What is happening in this passage?
3. What does it mean that Jesus is the light of the world? What does Christ claim for himself?
4. What are the benefits of following Jesus? What does Christ claim for his followers? What does Christ say to those who reject his claims (v 13-19)
5. In what ways do we live in darkness? How do we live by the light?
- 6.. How are we like the Pharisees? Are they avoiding a decision about who Jesus is? When have you done this before?

I am the Gate

John 10:1-10

¹“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. ²But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. ⁵A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” ⁶This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁷So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

Questions for Discussion

1. Who is Jesus talking to in this passage? What is the context?
2. How does Jesus contrast his coming to Israel (the sheepfold) with the thief and robber?
3. Who do you think is the gatekeeper?
4. What do we know about sheep? What about animal husbandry at the time?
5. What other bible stories do we think of involving shepherds or sheep?
6. What are the marks of the genuine shepherd?
7. What do you think of verse 5? Is it encouraging? How can we identify a false shepherd? Do we realize this is true today (that there is false teaching)?
8. Jesus says he is the door or gate. What is the door to and who is it for? What is needed to go through the door? What does a door symbolize (apart from where it leads)? What does the door here symbolize?
9. How does the idea that there are many paths up the same mountain contrast with what Jesus says when he says "I am the gate" or "I am the door?" How is Jesus' statement both inclusive and exclusive? What is difficult about this?
10. What does 'find pasture' mean? Do you really believe that God has given you freedom, sustenance and rest?

I am the Good Shepherd

John 10:11-21

¹¹I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

¹⁹There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. ²⁰Many of them said, “He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?” ²¹Others said, “These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the meaning of “for” in verse 11?
2. Did the Shepherd give his life for any but the sheep?
3. What other adjectives are applied to the Shepherd besides *good*?
4. Who is the *hired hand* that verse 12 refers to? How is this a warning to us, though we may not be in the ministry?
5. Who are the other sheep? Who do we see as other sheep?

I am the Resurrection and the Life

John 11:1-44

¹Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ²It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. ³So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." ⁴But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

⁵Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. ⁷Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." ⁸The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?" ⁹Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. ¹⁰But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." ¹¹After saying these things, he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." ¹²The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." ¹³Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. ¹⁴Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, ¹⁵and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." ¹⁶So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

¹⁷Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, ¹⁹and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. ²⁰So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. ²¹Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²²But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." ²³Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." ²⁵Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

²⁸When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." ²⁹And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. ³⁰Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. ³¹When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. ³²Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." ³³When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. ³⁴And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵Jesus wept. ³⁶So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" ³⁷But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?"

³⁸Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. ³⁹Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." ⁴⁰Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" ⁴¹So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴²I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me." ⁴³When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." ⁴⁴The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

Questions for Discussion

1. What do we think of death in our society? Why do we fear death?
2. Who are the characters and what do we already know about them?
3. What does Jesus tell his disciples is the reason for not going to Lazarus? What does that mean? How do we see this work itself out in the story?
4. What do you think about Thomas' comment in v. 16? Does he understand what Jesus is doing?
5. What does the metaphor of sleep (compared to death) teach us about death for a believer? Does this encourage you? Does our culture live in fear of death? In what ways do you see this?
6. Why is Jesus in anguish? What is the significance that Jesus weeps? Why is he deeply moved?
7. What is the significance that Jesus calls Lazarus by name? (v. 5:25-29)
What does this make you think about related to past lessons?
8. How does Martha's interaction encourage us in our faith?
9. What does Jesus mean when he says "I Am the Resurrection and the life..." ?
How is this story a larger metaphor for the human condition and the work of Christ and the benefits of salvation?

I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life

John 14:1-11

¹“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ²In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. ⁴And you know the way to where I am going.” ⁵Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” ⁶Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

⁸Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” ⁹Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

Questions for Discussion

1. Jesus is comforting his disciples in this passage. Why? What emotional state were the disciples in?
2. Why does Jesus implore two different times: 'believe in God' and 'believe in me'? Explain what Jesus is saying here.
3. What does the basis of comfort come from? (How is Christ preparing a place for us? What is the metaphor here?)
4. What is Thomas asking and thinking in verse 5?
5. Breakdown verse 6: How is Jesus each of these things (the way, truth, life)?

I am the True Vine

John 15:1-17

¹“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ²Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

¹²“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. ¹⁷These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

Questions for Discussion

1. Review: What has happened? Who is Jesus talking to?
2. What is the metaphor of the vine, vinedresser, and branches? What does this say about how we, Jesus and God relate?
3. What is the fruit Jesus is talking about? Do we have fruit in our lives? Why do we not?
4. What does pruning mean? What is it for and why is it necessary? What does it look like practically? Who is pruned and who is not?
5. “Abide” is used 15 times in this passage. What does abiding make us think of? How do we abide in Christ? What is the result?

Resources used for this study:

He Resurrection and the Life by John MacArthur

Abiding in Christ by John MacArthur

Comfort for Troubled Hearts: Who Goes When Jesus Comes? By John MacArthur

www.biblebb.com

The Gospel of John by Arthur Walkington Pink

http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/pinks_archive.htm

That You May Believe: Studies in the Gospel of John by Skip Ryan

Commentary on John by John Calvin

John: That You May Believe by R. Kent Hughes