

**LESSON 1: I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE**

This includes:

- 1. LEADER PREPARATION**
- 2. LESSON GUIDE**

**1. LEADER PREPARATION****LESSON OVERVIEW**

In the church, it's funny how we often rely on what others have to say about Jesus—who they think he is, what they think he's doing in the world, and what they think he's like—while we neglect to pay attention to how Jesus describes himself. Jesus is the most secure person to ever walk the earth, and he was eager to proclaim the truth about himself. Chief among those proclamations is this one: “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” The “exclusivity” of these claims is our ticket to hope. In this lesson, students will explore Jesus through his own words, and by “tasting” to see that he's good.

**LESSON OBJECTIVES**

- 1. WHAT:** It's important to pay attention to how Jesus describes himself, because we can miss who he really is if we neglect his words.
- 2. WHY:** Our knowledge of who Jesus really is impacts every area of our life—the more we know the truth about him, the more we'll feel drawn to him, and vice versa.
- 3. HOW:** Teenagers can slow down and pay better attention to what Jesus says and does, so they can “taste and see” that he is good.

**PRIMARY SCRIPTURE**

John 14:1-6

**SECONDARY SCRIPTURE**

Matthew 10:37-39

**TEACHING PREP**

**LEADER  
TIP**

**Use this short overview to prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your group, you'll want to absorb it as you prepare to lead.**

**Read John 14:1-6.**

“I am the way, the truth, and the life.” These well-known words of Jesus come just after he lowered the boom on his disciples. The context for John 13 is what most of us call the Last Supper. The dinner conversation was dominated by Jesus' unflinching description of what was about to happen to him. Bottom line: He was going away, and no matter how much they wished they could follow him, the disciples couldn't go where he was going—because he was going to the cross. Peter insisted that he was ready to die for him, but Jesus didn't tolerate this hubris: *Actually, you're going to betray me....*

And then, after this staggering and awkward interchange, he softened with this: “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” He was saying, essentially, “No worries... You don’t have to figure out where I’m going or how I’m going to get there—all you need is to hang on to me.” In Job 26–31, after the righteous man had endured the devastating loss of his family and fortune, he finally shook his fist at God and proclaimed his innocence. And God’s response to this outburst (chapters 38–39) is surprising, to say the least. He did not answer Job’s complaint, or the case he’d made for his innocence. Instead, God simply described himself. God did not point to answers; he pointed to himself. And this is what Jesus did with his disciples on the eve of his horror on Golgotha.

He wasn’t *directing* them to the “way;” he told them that he *is* the way. He wasn’t *showing* them how they can be filled with life; he asked them to *eat his flesh and drink his blood* (John 6:56) if they want any part of him. And he wasn’t *telling* them the truth; he *described himself* as truth.

Because his very nature is truth, Jesus never stops telling the truth, and he’s not always sensitive about it. In the film *Braveheart*, the great Scottish liberator of the 13th century, William Wallace, famously responds to an enemy who accuses him of being a “bloody murdering savage” and a “liar” by declaring, in Latin: “Ego nunquam pronunciari mendacium! Sed ego sum homo indomitus.” Translated, it means: “I never lie. But I am a savage.” That’s a pretty fair description of Jesus, if you understand “savage” to mean “fierce and brave and formidable” in this context.

Jesus wants nothing to do with false paths, imitation truths, and empty sources of life—he wants no cheap imitations of love, and he recognizes (as we most often do not) that there are far worse things that can happen to us than the pain we fear so deeply. “I am the way, the truth, and the life” is an invitation to attach ourselves to him, and that alone is our deepest comfort, and our profound source of strength.

## **THE BEFORE & AFTER [OPTIONAL]**

### **TEXTS OR TWEETS**

**Send one or both of these messages to your students prior to your meeting. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.**

- Where can you find the only source for the kind of life you long for? Come “drink” from that source this week.
- When we’re facing tough stuff in our life, why doesn’t God always give us the answers we want? Come find out more tonight.

### **PARENT EMAIL**

**Send this email to parents following the lesson to encourage them to continue the conversation at home. Feel free to edit and customize the email to fit your ministry needs.**

Dear parents,

We’ve launched a new series focusing on how Jesus described himself in Scripture—it’s called “In His Own Words.” Each week, our teenagers will explore the ways Jesus “framed” who he is—his purpose, motivation, and intentions.



In this first lesson, we explored John 14:1-6, where Jesus promised his disciples that the terrible things that were about to happen to him on the cross would be overshadowed by the hope and certain strength of his presence. He is “the way, the truth, and the life,” and none of us can find our way to God on a path other than him.

This week, I encourage you to spend a few minutes talking with your teenager about our lesson. Consider building your conversation around these questions:

- Why doesn't God simply answer our prayers by always changing our circumstances? What does he offer instead?
- How does Jesus' bold statement that he is the only way to God compare to our culture's stance on “finding God”?
- If we treated Jesus as the only source of truth and life, how would that change or challenge the way we live today?

Thanks for all your prayers for our students and our ministry. Have a great week!

**LESSON 1: I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE****2. LESSON GUIDE****GETTING THINGS STARTED [OPTIONAL]****LEADER  
TIP**

Gather a few newspapers and divide up the local/national/international news sections, so that each person will have at least a couple of pages of news.

Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, distribute the newspaper sections, and then lead students in this opening activity.

Begin by asking your students to each find the story that worries them the most from the news pages you've given them. Then have them each quickly describe their chosen news story, and explain why it worries them. (If you have fewer than four kids in your group, have them each choose two news stories that worry them.) Go around the group rapidly. Then lead a group discussion after everyone has shared.

**ASK:**

- *Compared to the way you felt when you arrived here today, how do you feel after listening to these news stories? Explain.*
- *What are the pros and cons of being well-informed about what's happening in your community, nation, and world?*
- *In general, would you rather be well-informed about all the hard, worrying things that are happening in the world, or not know about a lot of it? Why?*

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *Even though we all would say we value the truth, we don't always want "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." The truth can be hard to swallow. And that matters, because Jesus not only told "the whole truth," he also described himself as truth itself. Toward the end of the Last Supper, he tried to comfort his disciples, who were worried about the things Jesus said were about to happen to him—their friend was talking about the likelihood that he was about to die a violent death. To comfort them, he told them that they would always be with him. He didn't promise good news; instead, he promised that he would bring truth and life into their hard realities.*

**TEACHING POINTS****LEADER  
TIP**

Use the Teaching Points to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. Remember: All throughout these lessons, it's up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.



**Read John 14:1-6 together as a group. Consider dividing verses among your students so several people have a chance to read.**

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *The great 20th-century philosopher and media expert Marshall McLuhan famously said, “The medium is the message.” McLuhan says that the messages we hear have a less powerful influence on us than the person or thing delivering those messages. For example, the way you’re listening to your favorite music has much more long-term power to change who you are than the messages contained in that music. The same is true about Jesus—his message is powerful and life-changing, but the person of Jesus far overshadows his message. The message he brought us is full of hope and promise and redemption, but we can easily ignore that message if we want to. But it’s hard to ignore the medium of that message—Jesus himself—when we come to know him as he really is. Our invitation today is not to simply re-embrace a message we’ve heard before, but to “taste and see” that Jesus is good.*

## **1. WE DISCOVER THAT JESUS IS “THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE” WHEN WE “TASTE AND SEE” WHAT HE’S REALLY LIKE**

**ASK:**

- *What are some of the best ways to get to know someone for who they really are?*
- *How do you know you’re experiencing the “real person” when you’re getting to know someone?*
- *Jesus told people that they’d have to “eat his flesh” and “drink his blood” if they really wanted to know him—what do you think he meant by that?*
- *What are some words that describe your “taste” of Jesus?*
- *How can you be sure those words accurately describe who Jesus really is?*

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *When it dawns on us WHO is bringing the good news that we can be forgiven for our sins and have a restored relationship with God for eternity, the WHO actually overshadows the WHAT of the message. But don’t take my word for it—let’s explore for ourselves why Jesus called himself “the way, the truth, and the life.”*

## **2. ANSWERING THE “OPRAH QUESTION” ABOUT JESUS**

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *Oprah Winfrey has a favorite question she likes to ask the people she interviews: “What’s one thing you know for sure?” We can take that question and morph it a little into this: “What do you know for sure about Jesus from this passage?” Let’s take a short passage that recounts something Jesus said to his disciples and “taste and see” who Jesus really is. In Matthew 10:37-39, Jesus says: “If you love your father or mother more than you love me, you are not worthy of being mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than me, you are not worthy of being mine. If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine. If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it.”*



Ask students to form pairs for this question.



**ASK:**

- What do you know for sure about Jesus, based only on this passage from Matthew 10? Go ahead and look at the verses in your Bible, if that will help you consider the question.

After partners have had a few minutes to discuss the question, gather together to debrief their conversations—ask pairs to each summarize what they learned.

### 3. PURSUING THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *Of course, we've only scratched the surface of who Jesus really is. If we're determined to "taste and see" who he is at his core, we'll have to slow down and pay much better attention to what he says and does. So let's dig in a little—and when we do, we discover that he showed up at the "Harvard" of his day when he was just 12 and amazed all the "professors" with his knowledge of God and his wisdom. When he began his ministry he told his first disciples to chuck their careers and learn how to "fish for men" instead. He kicked off a ministry of miracles with kind of a party trick—turning water into wine. When he saw people in the Temple—a sacred space like a church—using the language of religion to line their pockets with cash, he made a whip and chased them all away. Once, he promised a desperate woman she'd never thirst if she took a big drink of him. And, of course, toward the end of his time with the disciples, he boldly described himself as "the way, the truth, and the life." Let's REALLY slow down for a moment and consider what he was saying here.*

**ASK:**

- If you ask someone for complicated directions to a far-off destination, that person could tell you how to get there, or he could lead you there himself—how does this illustration help you understand what Jesus meant when he said, "I am the way"?
- If Jesus is "the truth," then everything we call "true" must have its source in him—so, what are some things in our culture that we call "true" that Jesus would never say or do?
- We depend on air, water, and food to live—how is Jesus like air, water, and food in your life?

### EXTRA DISCUSSION [OPTIONAL]

Ask students to form groups of two or three for these questions.



**ASK:**

- Look at Matthew 10:37-39 again: What does it mean to "cling to your life" apart from Jesus?
- When have you "lost your life" for the sake of Jesus, and what happened as a result?

Bring everyone back together, and ask for volunteers to share answers to the previous questions, as time permits.

## LIVING IT OUT

### ASK:

- *What's one way you could slow down and pay better attention to Jesus for the next week?*
- *The "What would Jesus do?" movement assumed we know Jesus well enough to guess what he'd do in any situation. What makes it possible for us to know—really know—what Jesus would do in every situation?*
- *Most of us turn to Jesus only when we're facing a hard thing and need help—when have you turned to him when you weren't in need of help, and why?*

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *In our culture, it's popular to make God as "accessible" as possible by basically assuming that God is whoever and whatever we want him to be. We prefer to talk about God in generalities, but Jesus wants none of that—he's very specific about who God is, and how we can come to know him. And it's his specificity—"I am the way, the truth, and the life"—that ultimately helps us to recapture an intimate relationship with God. When we come to Jesus, we come back to the God who has longed for a restored relationship with us since the Garden of Eden.*



LEADER  
TIP

**Close by praying a corporate prayer of thanks—ask each person in your group to offer one word that represents what they love or appreciate about Jesus. Go around the circle until everyone has had a chance to offer a word, and then offer your own word in closing.**

## SUMMARY



LEADER  
TIP

**Provide a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) this lesson's content, (2) the dialogue that took place today, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.**

## FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]

**Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the Scripture below.**

*"I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).*